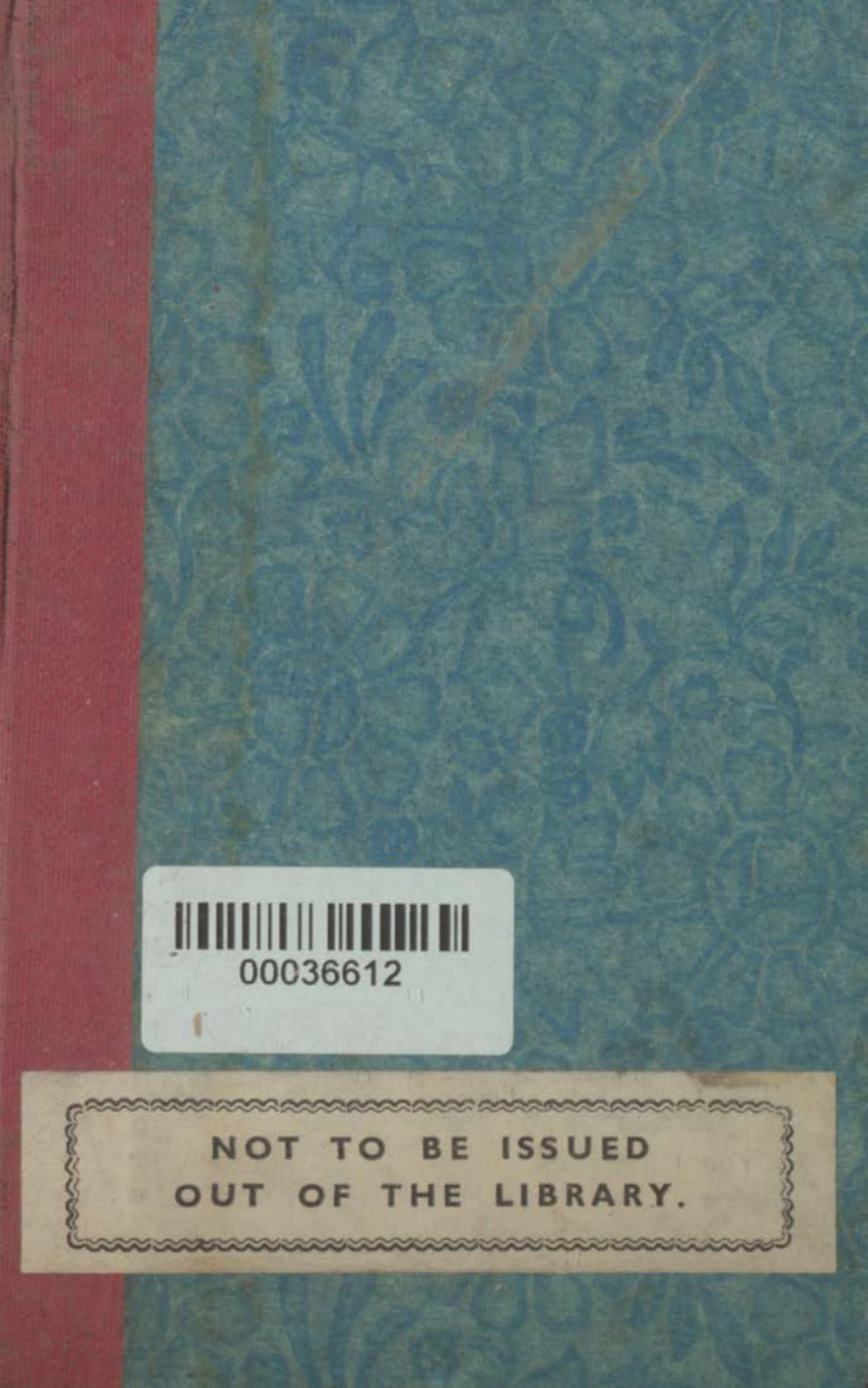
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CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
I.	PHYSICAL AND GEOGRAPHICAL FEATURES	1
II.	SKETCH OF POLITICAL HISTORY TO THE APPEARANCE OF THE BRITISH IN INDIA	8
III.	EUROPEAN COMMERCE WITH INDIA	14
IV.	THE BIRTH OF THE LONDON EAST INDIA COMPANY	21
V.	THE ENGLISH, DUTCH, AND PORTUGUESE IN THE EAST	28
VI.	EARLY SETTLEMENTS IN INDIA. THE COMPANY UNDER THE STUARTS, THE COMMONWEALTH, THE PROTECTORATE, THE RESTORATION	35
VII.	THE NEW EAST INDIA COMPANY	47
VIII.	GROWTH OF THE SETTLEMENTS, 1708–1746. THE OSTEND COMPANY	60
IX.	THE LIFE OF THE ENGLISH IN THE EAST	75
X.	THE ENGLISH AND FRENCH IN INDIA, TO THE PEACE OF AIX-LA-CHAPELLE	91
XI.	THE ENGLISH AND FRENCH ON THE COROMANDEL COAST, TO THE RECALL OF DUPLEIX	105
XII.	ENGLISH AND FRENCH IN INDIA, TO THE PEACE OF PARIS. REASONS FOR THE FRENCH DEFEAT	120
XIII.	THE REVOLUTION IN BENGAL. PLASSEY, AND CLIVE'S FIRST GOVERNORSHIP OF BENGAL	129
XIV.	MISGOVERNMENT IN BENGAL. REFORMS AND CLIVE'S SECOND GOVERNORSHIP	149
XV.	THE ADMINISTRATION OF WARREN HASTINGS TO THE END OF THE ROHILLA WAR	167
XVI.	WARREN HASTINGS. THE REGULATING ACT AND THE TRIAL OF NANDKUMAR	179
XVII.	WARREN HASTINGS. WARS IN WESTERN AND SOUTHERN INDIA	191
XVIII.	CHAIT SINGH AND THE BEGAMS OF OUDH. THE IMPEACHMENT OF WARREN HASTINGS	201
XIX.	INTERNAL REFORMS. THE GREAT LAND SETTLEMENT. LORD CORNWALLIS AND SIR JOHN SHORE	220

CHAPTER		PAGE
XX.	Expansion. Lord Wellesley. Subsidiary Alliances and Annexations	243
XXI.	Reaction from the Policy of Annexation. Lord Cornwallis, Sir George Barlow, Lord Minto	263
XXII.	Final Defeat of the Maratha Confederacy. Lord Hastings	276
XXIII.	The first Burmese War. Lord Amherst	292
XXIV.	Lord William Bentinck and Internal Reforms	300
XXV.	The first Afghan War. Lord Auckland and Lord Ellenborough	310
XXVI.	The Annexation of Sind under Lord Ellenborough	325
XXVII.	The first and second Sikh Wars and the Conquest of the Punjab. Lord Hardinge and Lord Dalhousie	333
XXVIII.	The second Burmese War. Lord Dalhousie. The Doctrine of Lapse	347
XXIX.	The Causes of the Mutiny. Lord Canning	359
XXX.	The Mutiny	368
XXXI.	The End of the East India Company	37
INDEX		38

LIST OF MAPS

	PAGE
India, showing physical features	4, 5
India in 1605	29
Sketch-map of the Carnatic	93
Sketch-map of parts of Bengal, Bihar, and Oudh	131
India in 1795	221
Sketch-map to illustrate the Maratha Wars	253
Sketch-map to illustrate the Burmese Wars, 1826, 1852, 1885	293
Ranjit Singh's Dominions in 1839	335
India in 1857 (the Mutiny year)	371

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Vol I
Pt. I.

HISTORICAL GEOGRAPHY OF INDIA

CHAPTER I

PHYSICAL AND GEOGRAPHICAL FEATURES

THE geography of India will be treated fully in a separate volume, and in this chapter only such broad aspects of the subject will be indicated as are absolutely necessary for a right understanding of the history.

The natural frontiers of India are mountains and sea, and this fact has had a preponderating influence upon her annals. From the mouth of the Indus on the west to the delta of the Ganges on the east the waters of the Arabian Sea and the Indian Ocean wash the shores of the great triangular peninsula of central and southern India. A vast irregular semicircle of mountains, with a few breaks in the line, extends from a point westward of the Indus to the shores of Arakan—the country on the eastern bend of the Bay of Bengal. This colossal natural rampart, if we trace its course from west to east, begins with the Kirtha range striking northward from Karachi, the seaport of Sind. At Quetta the mountains curve eastward for a time till the Sulaiman range again trends in a northerly direction. Sweeping round to the east are the Hindu Kush and the Karakoram mountains with their tremendous summits, some attaining an altitude of 28,000 feet. Thence the mighty double barrier of the Himalayas, including amongst its peaks Mount Everest, the loftiest elevation on the surface of the globe, stretches in a slightly concave south-eastern curve to the

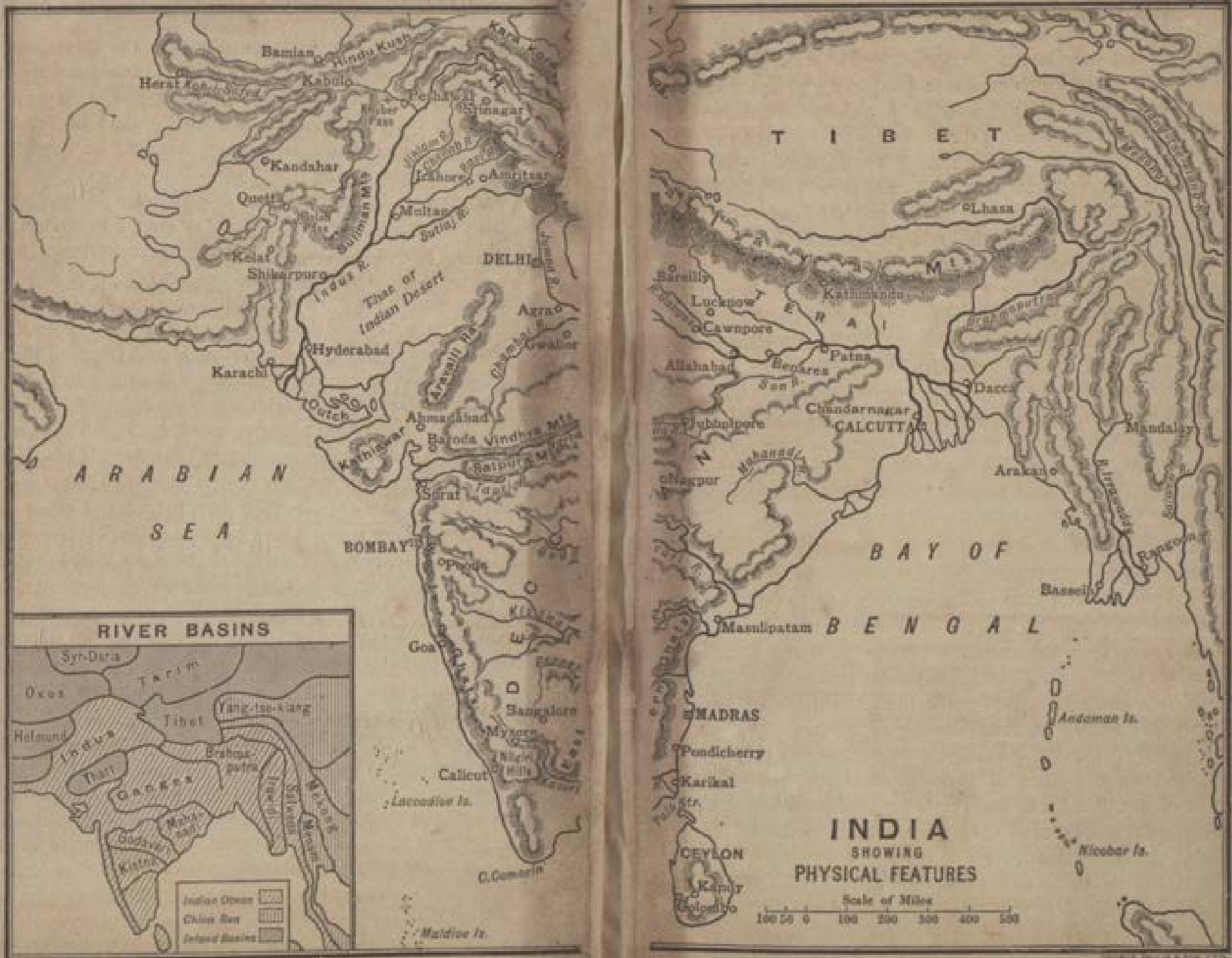
northern frontier of Assam. At the base of the central Himalayas runs a belt of malarial tiger-haunted jungle called Tarai or Duars, and beneath the forest overgrowth lie the buried remains of many ancient cities famous in Buddhist history. At right angles to the eastern edge of the Himalayas, hill ranges of lesser but still considerable elevation run due south to the seaboard of Arakan. India is thus magnificently fortified by nature, for the lowest passes over the Himalayas to the barren highlands of Tibet are 17,000 feet up, and are therefore useless except for the purposes of a primitive form of trade. To land armies she is vulnerable only from the west and north-west region of the mountain barrier, where the passes of the Khyber, Kurram, and Bolan lead down from the eastern edge of the Iranian plateau into the wide plains of the Punjab. Through their grim and frowning valleys successive invading hosts of Aryans, Huns, Afghans, Persians, and Mughals have marched to the conquest or plunder of Hindustan.

The configuration of the territories within these boundaries of mountain and sea now demands our attention. India falls naturally into two great divisions. First, Hindustan, which consists of the Himalayan system, the great northern alluvial plains, and the broken central plateau of Malwa and Bundelkhand; secondly, the Deccan, the triangular shaped peninsula of the south.[1] The division is marked by a broad belt of hills, rivers, and the course of two rivers; the Vindhya mountains run due east from the Gulf of Cambay, and for a great length between them and the Vindhya range the Narbada, 800 miles in length, flows westward into the

[1] Both names 'Hindustan' and 'Deccan' have unfortunately a wider and narrower denotation. Hindustan in its wider sense means all India lying north of the Vindhya Mountains; in the narrower sense, the upper basin of the Ganges. In like manner the Deccan sometimes means all India south of the Narbada, sometimes only the territory lying between that river and the Kistna. Further the term Hindustan is sometimes loosely applied by modern writers to the whole of India.

Arabian Sea; in an opposite direction the Mahanadi, with a more winding course, flows eastward into the Bay of Bengal. The barrier between Hindustan and the Deccan has always been well defined, and till the days of British rule it prevented India from being brought successfully under one imperial sway.

The great plains of India are in Hindustan. From the southern bases of the Himalayas they stretch westward to Kathiawar and eastward to the northern coast line of the Bay of Bengal. They are almost entirely composed of alluvial soil, the drainage of the mountains, brought down by two great rivers, the Indus and the Ganges. The Indus, 1,800 miles long, rises north of the Himalayas, and after flowing north-west for about 500 miles in a deep trough at the back of the range, pierces the mountain wall and turns southward. Then, after receiving as affluents the combined waters of the other four great rivers of the Punjab, it makes its way with greatly increased volume but slackened stream through Sind and empties itself by a network of channels into the Arabian Sea. The Ganges, swollen by its great tributaries, the Jumna, the Gogra, and the Gandak, flows for 1,500 miles across northern India almost parallel with the line of the Himalayas and, after irrigating an immense basin, finds its way through many mouths into the Bay of Bengal. Just before it merges into the sea, it is joined at Goalundo by the Brahmaputra, which under its Tibetan name of Tsanpo rises north of the Himalayas a few miles only from the source of the Indus, and flowing in a directly opposite direction for more than a thousand miles turns the eastern flank of the mountains by a wide detour winding first east and then south through the valleys of Assam into the plains of lower Bengal. So great is the volume of water carried down by these two mighty rivers that their combined delta, interlaced with innumerable channels, covers a space of 50,000 square miles. The great river systems of


Bamian
Hindu Kush
Kabul
Herat
Khyber Pass
Peshawar
Srinagar
Kandahar
Jehlum R.
Amritsar
Quetta
Multan
Sutlej R.
Kalat
Sulaiman Mts
DELHI
Jumna R.
Shikarpur
Indus R.
Thar or Indian Desert
Agra
Gwalior
Hyderabad
Karachi
Aravalli Hts
Chambal R.
Cutch
Ahmadabad
Baroda
Vindhya Mts
Kathiawar
Satpura Mts
ARABIAN SEA
Surat
BOMBAY
Goa
Kistna R.
Bangalore
Mysore
Nilgiri Hills
Calicut
Laccadive Is.
C. Comorin
Maldive Is.
RIVER BASINS
Syr-Daria
Oxus
Tarim
Tibet
Yang-tse-kiang
Helmund
Indus
Brahmaputra
Ganges
Mahanadi
Godavari
Krishna
Narbada
Indian Ocean
China Sea
Inland Basins
TIBET
Lhasa
Bareilly
Lucknow
Kathmandu
NEPAL
Cawnpore
Brahmaputra
Allahabad
Benares
Patna
Sun R.
Dacca
Chandarnagar
CALCUTTA
Jubbulpore
Mandalay
Narbada R.
Chanda
Hoogly R.
Arakan
Irrawaddy R.
BAY OF BENGAL
Basseir
Masulipatam
MADRAS
Andaman Is.
Pondicherry
Karikal
Palk Str.
CEYLON
Nicobar Is.
INDIA
SHOWING
PHYSICAL FEATURES
Scale of Miles
100 50 0 100 200 300 400 500

the Indus and the Ganges are parted by the watershed of the Aravalli range which runs in a north-easterly direction across Rajputana. To the west of this chain, where the irrigating waters fail, there is thrust, as it were, between the river valleys the wedge of the Thar or Indian desert, once the floor of a vast primaeval sea. A great part of this desolate tract was formerly fertilized by the vanished river Hakra, flowing almost parallel with the Indus, which is said to have only finally disappeared in the eighteenth century.

While the climate of the Indus valley is on the whole hot and dry, and along the lower reaches of the river itself cultivation only extends a few miles from the banks, the plain of the Ganges with its moisture-laden atmosphere, rich rice fields, and luxuriant vegetation is one of the most fertile and thickly populated districts in the world. On the banks of the sacred river stand the fairest and most famous cities of India. Here were the centres of early civilizations, the capitals of the ancient kingdoms, the seats of imperial dynasties.

The Deccan, which in the older and wider acceptation of the term includes all India south of the Vindhyas, is a high terraced plateau with a decided slope from west to east. It thus comes about that with the exception of the Narbada and the Tapti on the northern Deccan frontier, all the important rivers of southern India, the Mahanadi, Godavari, the Kistna with its tributary the Tungabhadra, and the Kaveri flow eastwards, though many of them rise within fifty miles of the western coast. The steep wall of the tableland on the coast of Malabar forms the mountain range of the Western Ghats, the lower escarpment on the Coromandel coast that of the Eastern Ghats. Between the foot of the Ghats and the sea lie belts of fertile plain land, and it was on these that Europeans coming by sea first landed and built their primitive factories and stations. On the Bombay side the level strip is very narrow, for the

mountains scarcely ever recede more than forty miles from the coast. On the Madras side it is much broader and the valleys of the Deccan rivers run far back among the hills. In the extreme south-east is the comparatively broad plain of Madura and Tinnevelly, for the Eastern Ghats, about two hundred miles from Cape Comorin, bend away to the west, and are linked up with the Western Ghats by the transverse range of the Nilgiris.

The coast line of India, which is about 3,000 miles in length, is singularly devoid of indentations, and the deltas of the rivers are difficult to navigate. On the western shore —the natural point of approach from Europe—Bombay is the only good unartificial harbour, and though it is one of the finest in the world, the city and its hinterland is so shut in by the Western Ghats, which extend from the Narbada to Cape Comorin with one break at Palghat, that till the development of railways it was a very poor centre for distribution. The eastern shore of the Deccan is a shallow, surf-beaten strand, and till the modern harbour of Madras was constructed landing could only be effected in small boats. Hence the unchallenged supremacy of Calcutta as a port for so many years. A glance at the physical map of India might suggest that the valley of the Indus was a more likely *point d'appui* from Europe. But the control of that waterway passed late into the hands of the British, and Karachi has only been made a tolerable port by artificial works. So, though the silt-laden channel of the Hughli is only kept open with difficulty, and its navigation is extremely dangerous, the delta of the Ganges has been till modern times the gate of India from the sea.[1]

[1] Of the physical and geographical features of Burma something will be said in chap. xiii.

CHAPTER II

SKETCH OF POLITICAL HISTORY TO THE APPEARANCE OF THE BRITISH IN INDIA

In this work we are not concerned with the ancient or mediaeval history of India. A few paragraphs must suffice to sum up the centuries that elapsed before India came into contact with European nations by sea. India has been called an 'ethnological museum'; it is a land with an infinite variety of races, religions, and languages. The original inhabitants seem to have been of a short, dark, and snub-nosed type, and their descendants now dwell mainly in southern India. The prevailing type in northern India is tall, fair-skinned, and long-nosed. They are almost certainly a branch of the great Aryan race which from about 1500 B.C. came thronging into Hindustan through the north-western passes in successive waves of immigration, driving back the aborigines into the fastnesses and table-lands of the Deccan. The Indo-Aryan invaders evolved their wonderful Vedic literature and the religion of Brahmanical Hinduism in the Punjab; and much later, about 500 B.C., in the upper Ganges valley, the religions of Buddhism and Jainism came into existence. Jainism never extended beyond India and is even there a declining faith. Buddhism has disappeared from the land of its birth, but its votaries outnumber those of any other creed upon the earth. There too was produced the unique caste system, which now holds all Hindu India in its deadening grip, segregating the population into thousands of non-associating groups parted from each other by immaterial yet adamantine barriers which forbid common intercourse and intermarriage.

Other invaders, Sakas, Kushans, and White Huns, followed in their train, some near akin to the Aryan stock, some (and these came probably through the north-eastern passes) of the yellow Mongolian type. In many cases the invading peoples intermarried with the aborigines, thus producing further varieties of races and languages. But on the whole the Aryan type prevailed in northern India and the pre-Aryan in the Deccan The tribes of the south are conveniently but not very scientifically known as Dravidians, and the ancient tongues they speak, Tamil, Telugu, Kanarese, Malayalam, and Tulu, are classified as belonging to the Dravidian family of languages.

Under the humanizing influence of Buddhism, Jainism, and Hinduism, a comparatively high stage of civilization was attained. Many Hindu empires and kingdoms rose and flourished, an outline of whose history is now being painfully wrested by scholars mainly from epigraphic and numismatic sources. About 500 B.C. the Indus valley was subdued by the generals of Darius, son of Hystaspes, King of Persia, and became for a short time a province of the Persian Empire. Indian archers fought in 479 B.C. on the field of Plataea. In 326 B.C. Alexander the Great crossed the Indus in his triumphant march across Asia and subdued the north-western part of Hindustan. But on his death in 323 B.C. his empire rapidly dissolved. No lasting imperial dominion in India was ever established by a Hindu people, though on three occasions such an event appeared to come within the bounds of probability. The short-lived empire of Asoka (273 to 232 B.C.?) is supposed by some authorities to have extended from the Hindu Kush mountains to, approximately, the northern frontier of Mysore. Again, Samudragupta of Pataliputra (the modern Patna) A.D. 400, and Harsha of Kanauj about 200 years later, extended their suzerainty over a great part of northern India, but neither founded a lasting dynasty.

India was next destined to experience the conquering sword of Islam. In the beginning of the eighth century of the Christian era the Arabians conquered Sind, and two hundred and fifty years later Muhammadan Turks were gathering threateningly round the northern mountain walls. Ghazni in Afghanistan was occupied in A. D. 862, and the Sultan of that city, Mahmud, between A. D. 997 and ~~1062~~, made fifteen raids into northern India, though the province of Lahore was the one permanent possession that remained to his house. Muhammad of Ghor, having conquered Ghazni, led six invasions of India between 1175 and 1206, and one of his generals founded a Turkish dynasty which ruled at Delhi. The Muhammadans gradually acquired Bihar and Bengal and penetrated far into the Deccan. Four dynasties of Muhammadan kings succeeded each other on the throne of Delhi between A. D. 1206 and 1526. Meanwhile in central and southern India many ruling Muhammadan Houses established themselves, pre-eminent among them being the five Deccan kingdoms of Ahmadnagar, Bijapur, Golconda, Bidar, and Berar, which for about 150 years before A. D. 1565 maintained a desultory warfare with Vijayanagar, the chief Hindu state of southern India.

Finally, in the sixteenth century a new conqueror, Babar the Mughal, overthrew the other Muhammadan powers of northern India. Originally the chief of Farghana in modern Turkestan, he had made himself master of Kabul, and between A. D. 1505 and 1525 led four expeditions through the north-western passes. In his fifth expedition he defeated Sultan Ibrahim, the last of the Lodi kings of Delhi, on the field of Panipat (1526) and founded the Mughal Empire. But in 1530, before he could consolidate his power, he died. His dominions extended over part of northern India, roughly speaking from the Indus on the west to the frontier of Bengal. His son Humayun, after some troubled years of rule, was driven back to Afghanistan, but in 1555 partially

recovered his father's conquests. He died in the moment of his triumph and left to his son Akbar in 1556 a kingdom consisting practically of the Punjab with the districts round Delhi and Agra. Akbar (1556–1605), almost exactly contemporary with Queen Elizabeth of England, was the greatest of the Mughal emperors. He subdued Rajputana, Gujarat, Sind, Malwa, Khandesh, Bengal, and Kashmir; recovered Kandahar, and Afghanistan, and, by making Ahmadnagar a dependency of the empire, extended his frontier in the Deccan roughly speaking to the line of the river Godavari. But Akbar did more than enlarge the boundaries of his dominions. He built up an administrative and financial system which gave a definite form and cohesion to Mughal sovereignty. The empire was divided into fifteen *subahs* or provinces, each under a governor or viceroy known as *Subadar*, *Nawab*, or *Nazim*, with a financial officer to assist him known as the *Diwan*. Muhammadan political terminology is not very scientific. Properly speaking the title *Subadar* would seem to be applied to the rulers of the great provinces, and that of *Nawab* to his subordinates, the governors of the lesser subdivisions. Thus the *Subadar* of the Deccan was the overlord of the *Nawab* of the Carnatic. Often, however, these titles seem to be interchangeable; Bengal was politically perhaps the most important province of all, but its ruler was more often styled *Nawab* than *Subadar*. In India the bulk of the state revenue has always been derived from the soil, and Akbar's great Hindu minister, Todar Mall, carried through the first great land settlement, i. e. he determined and placed on record the proportion of the produce that must be paid to the treasury by the cultivators, as Crown rent.

Up to this time the Mughal sway in Hindustan had been little more than a military occupation, but Akbar left to his son Jahangir (1605–27)—almost coeval with James I, to whom in character he has been compared—an empire strong

and well administered. It was in the latter's reign that the English acquired their first factory on the Indian coast, and at his court that Sir Thomas Roe resided for three years as ambassador from the King of England. For about a hundred years from the accession of Jahangir, the Mughal Empire was governed by a line of able and powerful rulers, and the general peace they maintained throughout northern and central India was undoubtedly favourable to the growth and development of the European settlements. In the reign of Shah Jahan (1627–58) the southern Muhammadan kingdoms of Bijapur and Golconda acknowledged the suzerainty of Delhi, and though the control of the Mughals over the Deccan was never very effective, the states in that region were to some extent overawed and induced to maintain comparative peace amongst themselves by their dread of the great empire in the north. When after 1712 the mighty fabric fell into decay, the European settlers, though they had many difficulties and dangers still to face, were left strong enough to maintain their position in the era of confusion and political anarchy that ensued.

In the reign of Aurangzeb (1658–1707), by far the greatest event as regards the history of India was the gradual rise of the Marathas, a Hindu people whose original home was Maharashtra, the hilly territory of the Western Ghats lying east of Bombay and south of the Satpura mountains. This despised race of Deccan peasants was destined to be the most powerful solvent of the Mughal Empire and the most determined rival of British supremacy in India. The people themselves and their ruling house were of low caste origin, though many of their later political leaders were high caste Brahmans. They were physically a small, active, hardy tribe, famous as light horsemen and contemned as mere plunderers and brigands—the 'mountain rats of the Deccan', as Aurangzeb styled them. They were welded together as a nation by Sivaji (1627–80), who successfully resisted

Mughal efforts to crush him and gradually extended his sway over southern India wherever his neighbours were weak and their territories defenceless. Ranging over the Deccan he demanded *chauth* or blackmail, a tribute usually of one-fourth of the revenue, from the states not strong enough to withstand him, and if they refused to pay it he harried their lands with fire and sword. The descendants of Sivaji in the second generation reigned only as pageant kings at Satara, and the real sovereignty passed to their Brahman minister or *Peshwa*, Balaji Vishvanath, who founded a dynasty seated at Poona. But Maratha power still grew, and by the middle of the eighteenth century threatened every settled government from Cape Comorin to Bengal and Rajputana. A terrible defeat on the field of Panipat in the Punjab at the hands of the Afghan invader of India, Ahmad Shah Durrani, in 1761, drove them back for a time in headlong rout to the Deccan, but the conqueror returned to his own country and the Marathas soon recovered their position. It seems certain that but for the British challenge the whole inheritance of the Mughals would have passed into their hands, and, as we shall see in the course of this history, four hard-fought campaigns were necessary before the Maratha confederacy was shattered, subdivided, and subdued.

CHAPTER III

EUROPEAN COMMERCE WITH INDIA

AFTER the invasions of Alexander the Great and his successor Seleucus Nikator about 300 B. C., India, except for the travels of Marco Polo the Venetian in 1294–5, remained practically unvisited by Europeans till the end of the fifteenth century.

Even the genius of Imperial Rome had turned back from the thought of Indian conquest. The distances were appalling, the difficulties insuperable. Yet the products of Indian soil and craftsmanship were from time immemorial well known in western marts. They were brought by ancient trade routes to the shores of the Black Sea, to the Levant, or to Egypt. In classical times Tyre, Alexandria, and Constantinople became successively the chief *emporia* of eastern commerce, to be replaced in the Middle Ages by Venice and Genoa, whence merchants carried their wares to Antwerp, or Bruges in the Netherlands, and the cities of the Hanseatic league.

The conquest by the Turks of south-western Asia and south-eastern Europe did much to close the old channels of commercial intercommunication, and dealt a serious blow at the prosperity of the Italian republics and the marts in northern and central Europe with which they were connected. The onslaught of the Ottoman power, however, only hastened a movement that was in any case inevitable. The discovery of the ocean route to India could not be indefinitely postponed, though the barrier interposed across the ancient land paths stimulated the cause of maritime enterprise. The ancient fame of India and the desire for

a share in her traditional wealth led indirectly to the discovery of a new world in the West, the tragedies of early Arctic exploration, and the full recognition by mankind of the spherical form of this planet.

In the opening up of new continents men of Latin race led the way. Christopher Columbus the Genoese, seeking to reach India by the western route, discovered the West Indies and South America for Spain in 1492. In 1497 John Cabot, also a Genoese by birth but a naturalized citizen of Venice, sailed from Bristol with an English crew and landed in Newfoundland. To Portugal belongs the glory of having realized the quest for India by sea after years of stubborn endeavour and heroic perseverance. From 1418 to 1460 a succession of Portuguese sea captains, inspired and trained by Prince Henry the Navigator, crept further and further down the western shore of Africa. In 1486 Bartholomew Diaz was carried by storm winds past the Cape of Good Hope. In the following year Pedro de Covilham, travelling overland, reached the coast of Malabar and explored the Indian Ocean from an eastern base. The south-eastern route to India was now definitely proved to be feasible, and in May 1498 Vasco da Gama safely rounded the Cape, crossed the Indian Ocean, and anchored off the coast of Calicut.

During the sixteenth century the Portuguese enjoyed a monopoly of the trade to the East—a monopoly formally granted to them by the *fiat* of the Papacy. By the Bull of Pope Alexander VI in 1493, as interpreted by the Treaty of Tordesillas in 1494, and ratified in further Bulls of Julius II and Leo X in 1506 and 1514, an imaginary line was drawn 370 leagues west and south of the Cape Verde Islands. All undiscovered countries east of that line were assigned to Portugal, and all lands on the west to Spain. The pronouncement of the Pope was universally regarded throughout Catholic Europe as the highest possible expres-

sion of international law, while the Protestant nations for nearly a hundred years did not feel themselves strong enough to defy it. Not till many hopes had been dashed and many lives lost in the attempt to force a route to India by a north-west or north-east passage (upon which no embargo was laid by the Bulls) did England and Holland nerve themselves to strike out to the south-east and south-west.

For a century, therefore, Portugal had a clear field. She held 'the gorgeous East in fee', at least so far as the Popes could enable her to do so. The sails of her swift caravels were seen henceforward from Ormuz in the Persian Gulf, as far eastward as Malacca and the Spice Islands. Goa, on the western coast of the Deccan, the capital of Portuguese India, was acquired in 1510 and fortified factories were established at Quiloa, Mombassa, and Melinde on the east coast of Africa, at Ormuz in the Persian Gulf, at Diu, Daman, and Cochin on the coast of Malabar, and at Malacca in Malaysia. The period of Portuguese supremacy produced some great names, especially those of Vasco da Gama, Almeida (1505–9), and Albuquerque (1509–15). It brought riches and fame to the Portuguese kings, and inspired the epic genius of the poet Camoens; but Portugal was not destined to win a permanent dominion in India. By the discovery of Brazil a great part of her colonizing energy was devoted to the West. Portugal, says Mr. Whiteway, was the earliest intruder into the East, and the East 'has resented' the intrusion 'by absorbing and degrading the intruder'.[1] The trading methods of Portuguese sea captains had more than a flavour of piracy about them. Profits were derived quite as much from plundering raids upon Arabian merchants as from legitimate commerce. Portuguese treatment of the natives often showed a cruelty lower than the standards of a cruel age. The eastern power

[1] *The Rise of Portuguese Power in India*, R. S. Whiteway, p. 2.

of the Catholic pioneer nation was destined to yield before the more vigorous methods and less romantic ideals of the commercial Protestant states of the North, but even had the field been left clear, it is very doubtful whether her power would not have slipped from her hands, either when the Mughal Empire conquered the southern Muhammadan kingdoms, or at the recrudescence of Hindu power under the Marathas.

Gradually, as the sixteenth century drew to an end, the conviction was reached that there was no feasible route to India by a north-west or north-east passage. The voyages of the Englishmen, Hore, Willoughby, Frobisher, Davis, and the Dutchman Barents, were not unfruitful either in the field of commerce or that of geographical exploration. Hore reached Newfoundland in 1536, Sir Hugh Willoughby discovered Nova Zembla and explored the northern coast of Russia. His voyage resulted in the foundation of the Russia or Muscovy Company which opened to English merchants an overland trade with Persia. Frobisher (1575–8) and Davis (1585–7) traversed the fringe of the Arctic regions to the north-west, while the Dutchman Barents (1594–6) made desperate attempts to break through to the north-east, in the course of which he visited Staten Island and Spitzbergen. In 1519–21 a Spanish squadron accomplished the dream of Columbus in reaching the East Indies by the western route. It was commanded by Ferdinand Magellan, who, having served under and quarrelled with Albuquerque, offered his services to the Emperor Charles V. He coasted down the shores of South America, passed through the straits that have immortalized his name, and voyaged across the vast expanse of the Pacific to the Philippines. There he himself was killed, but the expedition reached the Moluccas and one ship returned to the port of embarkation, having thus completed the circumnavigation of the globe. This was a wonderful feat in view of the small vessels and rude

nautical instruments of the time, and it clearly showed that of the possible southern routes the one to the south-west was so tedious and circuitous that it could never be commercially profitable.

Three causes, geographical, religious, and political, thus converged to make England and Holland openly refuse to obey any longer the Papal Bull. First, their despair of discovering the northern passage. Secondly, their rebellion from the Pope's spiritual authority. Thirdly, the forcible annexation by Spain of the kingdom of Portugal in 1580, which set a totally different aspect upon the question. England ever since 1386 (the Treaty of Westminster) had remained on friendly terms with Portugal, and the United Netherlands had traded freely with Lisbon, the commodities of eastern marts being shipped thence to Antwerp for distribution amidst the ports of northern Europe. After 1580 the port of Lisbon, now under the territorial sovereignty of Philip II, closed its gates to the rebels of the Low Countries, and Elizabeth of England was gradually driven by her people, by the merchants and the buccaneers, to make open war with Spain. In 1579 Sir Francis Drake on his way round the world visited the Moluccas, or Spice Islands, in the East Indies by the south-western route and is said to have entered into treaty relations with the chief of Ternate. From this date it was inevitable that England and Holland should openly challenge the supremacy of Portugal in the Indian Ocean. Spain even offered in 1607 to renounce her claim to sovereignty over the United Provinces if the Dutch would abandon the navigation of the Indies. The English and Dutch assault upon the Portuguese monopoly was contemporaneous, and it was quite an open question in the race for pre-eminence which nation would be the first to reach its goal. It is impossible here within the space at our disposal to describe in detail the fluctuations in fortune and the progressive steps by which now England, now Holland,

pushed forward her pioneering flag. Broadly, and in outline, the course of events was as follows. The East India Companies of the two nations were founded within a few years of each other. The English Company was the first to be incorporated, but for many years it lagged behind the great Company of the United Netherlands in power and prosperity. For the first decades of the seventeenth century both nations were forced to make their way in the teeth of Portuguese resistance, but when that was surmounted, they turned jealously upon one another. Both coveted the Far East, the Malay Archipelago, rather than the mainland of India, as the fairer and more profitable inheritance, and there ultimately the Dutch secured their hold, driving out the English by their superior physical force, and keeping them out by the restrictive and monopolizing spirit that in the seventeenth century dominated the colonial policy of Holland. The English reluctantly and perforce were driven to develop their settlements on the mainland, little realizing at the time that India itself was destined to confer on its possessors the sovereignty of the East, while the attractive Spice Islands were in reality a seductive by-path leading those who followed it astray from the road to dominion. The Dutch had thus early in their eastern history been led into a cardinal error, but it was an error impossible for them or any other nation to avoid in the light of contemporary knowledge. Nor would it be fair to attribute wholly to this initial step the fact that the English and not the Dutch were ultimately to attain supremacy in the East. Dutch power in India was largely jeopardized on European battlefields. The eastern dominion of Holland, compact and profitable, is even now no mean inheritance, and is perhaps as great in extent and achievement as it ever could have been, in view of the endless political difficulties from European complications that beset the path of Dutch statesmen. It was on the Dutch pattern that the English of the seventeenth

century consciously modelled their administrative system in India. 'Our design in the whole', wrote the Court in 1687, 'is to set up the Dutch government among the English in India (than which a better cannot be invented) for the good of posterity and to put us upon an equal foot of power with them to defend or offend or enlarge the English dominion, and unite the strength of our nation under one entire and absolute command subject to us as we are and ever shall be most dutiful to our sovereign, with this distinction that we will always observe our own old English terms, viz. Attorney General instead of Fiscal. . . . President and Agent instead of Commandore, Directore, or Commissaries.'[1]

Such is the barest outline of the course of events. The history of Holland in the East can only be dealt with in detail where it touches that of Great Britain, and even so the narrative must necessarily be summarized.

[1] India Office Records, Letter Book No 8, Dispatch to Fort St. George, Sept. 28, 1687.

CHAPTER IV

THE BIRTH OF THE LONDON EAST INDIA COMPANY

THE visit of Sir Francis Drake to the Moluccas in 1579 has already been noticed. It was prophetic of what was to come. The craving of adventurous Englishmen to sail southwards and eastwards could no longer be kept back by the calculating policy of the Queen, who, a slave now to the purely negative and dilatory policy that had served her so well at the opening of her reign, still blew hot and cold in her reluctance to come to an open breach with Philip of Spain. She braced herself in 1580 to declare to the Spanish ambassador that 'the ocean was free to all, for as much as neither nature nor regard of public use do permit the exclusive possession thereof'.[1] In 1582 England made the first direct attempt of any European power to break down the Portuguese monopoly by a voyage round the Cape. Edward Fenton sailed with four ships, but proved an unfortunate or incompetent captain, and the expedition ended disastrously.

The first Englishman known to have lived on the mainland of India was Thomas Stephens. He became in 1579 Rector of the Jesuit college in Goa. The letters he wrote to his father are said to have spread in England a wider desire for direct communication with the East. In 1583 two English merchants, Fitch and Newbery, accompanied by Leedes, a jeweller, and Story, a painter, journeyed overland to India. The Portuguese arrested them at Ormuz, and took them prisoners to Goa. After their release, Story

[1] *History of Elizabeth*, William Camden, 1675, p. 255.

became a monk, Leedes entered the Mughal service, Newbery died on the way home, but Fitch, after adventurous wanderings through Bengal, Burma, Malacca, and Ceylon, returned safely home in 1591, to inspire in his countrymen a keener desire for trade and exploration in the East.

The defeat of the Armada in 1588 impelled even the Queen to show her hand more boldly. Permission was granted to some merchants to attempt a voyage by the Cape route. In 1591 James Lancaster, in the *Edward Bonaventura*, reached Cape Comorin and the Malay Peninsula, though the commander of the expedition, George Raymond, went down with his ship. On his return voyage Lancaster was driven by storm winds to the coast of Brazil and the West Indies. There part of his crew mutinied and carried off the ship, and Lancaster sailed for England in a French vessel, arriving in May 1594. In 1596 a squadron of three vessels was dispatched by Sir Robert Dudley under the command of Benjamin Wood, but was never heard of again. In 1599 a London merchant adventurer, John Midnall or Mildenhall, reached India by the overland route. He was granted a passport by Elizabeth, and spent seven years in the East, during which time he visited the court of the Emperor Akbar at Agra, and procured from him certain privileges of very dubious value. These he afterwards attempted in vain to sell to the East India Company, which had been incorporated during his absence.

The old Turkey Company, founded in 1581, had been granted permission in 1593 to trade overland as far as the East Indies, and was renamed the Levant Company, but the difficulties of the trade route were such that little good came of it. Accordingly two prominent members of the Levant Company, moved no doubt by the fact that Cornelius Houtman, a Dutchman, had sailed to Sumatra and Bantam by the Cape route in 1596, came forward with a number of other merchants and raised a subscription for

a voyage to India by way of the Cape. On September 24, 1599, they met together, subscribed a sum of £30,133 3*s.* 8*d.*, and applied to Elizabeth for a charter. But in the realm of high politics negotiations were pending for a truce to end the long war with Spain, and the government were not inclined to imperil all chances of a settlement by granting the prayers of a few traders. The next year prospects were more favourable, for the peace proposals had been shipwrecked. Accordingly, a year later all but a day, September 23, 1600, the adventurers met again, in Founders' Hall, more than doubled the amount of their former subscription, raising it to £68,373, and purchased ships. They asked only for leave to trade in the East where Spaniards and Portuguese 'have not any castle, fort, blockhouse, or commandant'. They thus ignored the right founded on a Papal Bull, but recognized the doctrine of effective occupation. On the last day of the year 1600 the East India Company was incorporated by name of 'the Governor and Company of Merchants of London trading into the East Indies'.

The number of subscribers was 217. The first governor, Thomas Smythe, and twenty-four 'committees' (i.e. committee men) were nominated in the charter, and were afterwards to be annually elected. The exclusive trade with India was granted for fifteen years. Thus the first great step was taken on that path which was to lead Great Britain to the goal of her wonderful eastern empire. It is interesting to pause for a moment and attempt to estimate the magnitude of the task that lay before the stout-hearted body of merchant adventurers, to eliminate for a moment the facts of later history as we know them, and face the problem as they faced it. The preliminary step was one requiring no mean courage on the part of those who took it. They had no first-hand knowledge of the East; the reports of Fitch and Stephens and a translation of the

works of the Dutch traveller, Linschoten, who had lived at Goa 1583–9, were almost all upon which they had to rely. Peace with Spain was not concluded till 1604, and they fully realized that they had to face the determined hostility of the Spaniards and Portuguese, the latter of whom had enjoyed for a century the prescriptive right to the Indian seas. The Dutch also were certain to prove formidable rivals. Though the great United Dutch Company was not founded till 1602, the numerous provincial companies of the Netherlands dispatched between 1595 and 1601 no less than fifteen expeditions to the East consisting of sixty-five ships.

The task before the London East India Company was therefore a hard one. It had to explore and map out the Indian seas and coasts, it had painfully to work out a system of commerce, to experiment with commodities and merchandise, to train and discipline a staff of servants. It had to brave or conciliate the hostility of England's hereditary Catholic enemy and her new Protestant rival. Further, it had to establish a position even at home. The English East India Company was the first organized attempt to trade with India based upon individual effort. Portugal's achievements in the East had been due mainly to the protecting care of her royal house. The Dutch Company was to be backed and defended by the states of the United Netherlands, which through its agency transferred to the Indian Ocean and there prosecuted with renewed vigour their undying quarrel with the Spaniard. Just as Elizabeth left the sporadic naval war with Spain, and even the defence of England against the Armada, mainly to private enterprise and patriotism, so there was no active state support given to England's first essays in the East. The East India Company was cradled in the chilly but invigorating atmosphere of individualism. It had to cope with the lingering mediaeval prejudice against the export of bullion and a fallacious

theory of foreign trade. It had to depend altogether on mercantile initiative, and merchants desire a profitable and immediate return upon their outlay. Profitable the returns of an Indian voyage often were, though the margin of possible disaster was very wide; immediate, never. A period of two years was almost the least time that could elapse between the departure and the return of a ship, even if it survived the hazard of storm or the attack of an enemy. Under the early system of separate voyages, in which each fleet was dispatched to India by a particular group of subscribers, who on the return of their vessels wound up the venture and realized the profits, there was no averaging up the losses and gains, for each venture stood by itself. It was not till after more than half a century of trial that the Company was driven by various stages to adopt a permanent joint stock after the fashion of modern times.

Fortune smiled upon the Company's first voyage. It consisted of five vessels under the command of James Lancaster, who set sail on February 13, 1601, visited Achin in Sumatra, and delivered to the King a letter from Queen Elizabeth. Having captured a richly laden Portuguese carrack and left a factory at Bantam, Lancaster returned to England in September 1603. Middleton, the commander of the second voyage, visited Bantam and the Spice Islands, Amboyna, Ternate, and Tidore (1604–6). He encountered much opposition from the Dutch, who, since the coalition and federation of the provincial companies into the great United East India Company of the Netherlands, with a capital eight times as great as that of its English rival, were sedulously pushing forward their claim to monopolize the spice trade of the Archipelago. The third voyage was memorable from the fact that a landing was then first made on the mainland of India, Captain Hawkins disembarking at Surat in 1608 and visiting the court of Jahangir at Agra. The Emperor received him favourably and

granted the English permission to settle in Surat, but the Portuguese were still strong enough in India to procure the revocation of the decree. Hawkins waited in vain for two and a half years at Agra, marrying an Armenian wife at Jahangir's suggestion, and hoping against hope, as he wrote to the Company, 'I should feather my nest and do you service'. Finally he made his way down to the coast, and embarked in an English ship in January 1612.

The year 1612 forms a convenient terminal date for the first chapter of the Company's history. It is the year of the ninth and last separate voyage,[1] and of Captain Best's naval victory over the Portuguese off Swally, which was not only the East India Company's first definite armed success over a European rival, but resulted, through the foresight and policy of Thomas Aldworth, in permission to build a factory at Surat. In the first twelve years of its existence the East India Company could claim only a moderate measure of success. Till 1612 the English had obtained no permanent establishment on the mainland of India, while their position in the eastern islands was weak as compared with that of the Dutch, and in the Red Sea they had seriously damaged their commercial reputation by the 'romaging'—that is, pillaging—of Indian vessels. On the other hand their profits, though irregular, had been large, and the approval of the Crown and the nation had been shown in the grant of the second charter, dated 1609, which re-endowed the Company, now reinforced by many members of the nobility, with the trade in perpetuity, unless it should prove unprofitable to the realm, when it could be revoked on three years' notice being given.

But the Company was about to enter another zone of troubles and hardships. It had still battles to fight with

[1] Between 1612, the date of the last separate voyage, and 1657, when the permanent joint stock was raised, there was an intermediate stage of transitory joint stocks and 'Particular' or 'General' voyages.

the Portuguese before it could secure a foot-hold on the mainland, and even fiercer combats to wage with the Dutch for what was universally regarded as the *El Dorado* of the East, the Spice Islands of the Malay Archipelago. Troubles from interlopers—that is, traders who infringed the monopoly—civil war, popular hatred, and the favours of fickle and embarrassed sovereigns were to beset it at home, and during the next hundred years the Company had many a struggle to maintain its corporate existence and the continuity of its trade.

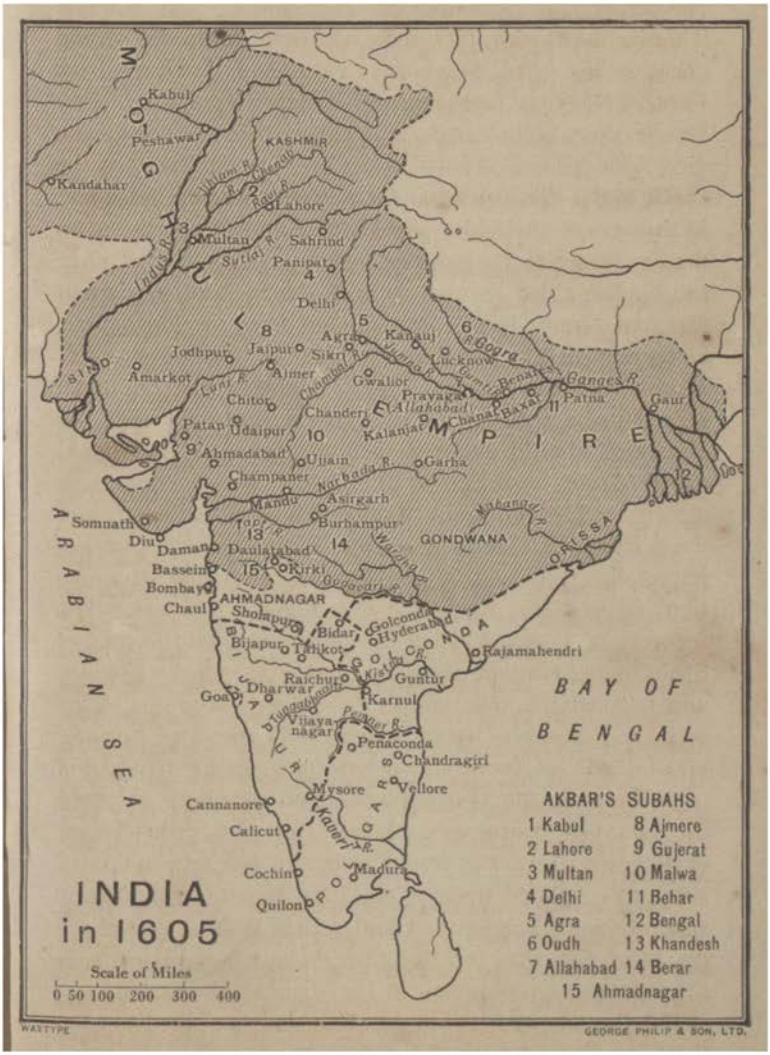
CHAPTER V

THE ENGLISH, DUTCH, AND PORTUGUESE IN THE EAST

BEFORE dealing in detail with the early settlements of the Company, something may profitably be said of the international relations of the three European nations competing for the Indian trade, during the first half of the seventeenth century. Such a summary will inevitably pass beyond the period with which we are at present concerned, but it is convenient to group certain facts under definite headings and to dispose of them before resuming the main thread of the narrative.

The conflict was a threefold one. There was the struggle between the Portuguese and the Dutch, between the Portuguese and the English, and between the Dutch and the English. The first aspect of the conflict hardly concerns us here. It is enough to say that the Dutch captured Amboyna from the Portuguese in 1605 and gradually supplanted them in the Spice Islands. They blockaded Goa in 1639, seized Malacca in 1641, and took the last Portuguese stronghold in Ceylon in 1658. By 1664 they had ousted their rivals from all their early settlements on the Malabar coast.

Peace between England and Spain was made in 1604, but it hardly extended to the Indies, though by the treaty and their charter the English were henceforward debarred from resorting to Portuguese possessions, since the Spanish and Portuguese Crowns were united from 1580 to 1640. In 1611 a Portuguese fleet prevented Sir Henry Middleton from entering the mouth of the Tapti river. But in



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November and December of the following year Captain Thomas Best with two ships defeated them in several engagements. In December 1614 and January 1615 Captain Nicholas Downton, with a larger squadron of four vessels, won a still more decisive victory over the Portuguese viceroy in person. These defeats irretrievably damaged the credit of the Portuguese on the western shore of India, and in the eyes of the native powers the English were the natural successors to the prestige they had enjoyed. In 1622 the English allied themselves with the Shah of Persia and captured Ormuz in the Persian Gulf from the Portuguese, being rewarded by permission to settle in Gombroon and to receive half the customs dues. Henceforward Portugal ceased to be a dangerous rival to England. In 1630 the Treaty of Madrid declared that the two countries should abstain from hostilities in the East. But a convention signed by Methwold, the English President of Surat, and the Viceroy of Goa in 1634 was of much more practical importance, and actually guaranteed commercial inter-relations between the English and Portuguese in India. The recovery by Portugal of her independence from the yoke of Spain in 1640 further mitigated the hostility of the English, and recalled the old tradition of alliance and friendship with the Portuguese nation. In 1642 Charles I of England and John IV of Portugal concluded a treaty for freedom of trade between the two countries, and definitely accepted the Surat-Goa convention. Finally Cromwell, in his Treaty of July 1654, extorted from Portugal a full recognition of England's right to trade to the East Indies. The Treaty which brought Bombay to Charles II in 1661 as part of the dower of Catherine of Braganza, bound him to maintain the Portuguese possessions in India against the Dutch.

But the enmity between England and her hereditary foe the Catholic and Latin Spanish-Portuguese Empire was as nothing to that which existed in the eastern seas between

herself and the Dutch, the northern Protestant power with whom, in Europe at any rate, she seemed to have so much in common. This was no doubt mainly due to the fact that at a comparatively early stage the Englishman realized that 'the Hollander' and not 'the Portugal' was the real enemy. The Dutch, on the other hand, were aggrieved by the mere appearance of the English in the East. Their assault on Portuguese possessions was a continuation of the struggle for freedom against the despotic power of Spain. 'Holland', says Sir William Hunter, 'turned her despairing land-revolt into a triumphant oceanic war';[1] she extended that war to the Far East and she wanted no third competitor for the prize of victory. In 1609 her proud enemy Spain, after vainly endeavouring in 1607 to purchase a Dutch withdrawal from India by conceding independence in Europe, was forced to agree to a twelve years truce. The Dutch were now free to display their enmity to the English and to develop their plan of campaign for acquiring a monopoly of the trade in the Moluccas, which they claimed by right of conquest from the Portuguese. On the high seas and in many an Indian port, collisions took place between hot-headed sea captains or jealous commercial rivals; a famous incident in this unofficial war was Nathaniel Courthope's defence of Pulo Run, one of the Banda Islands, with a tiny garrison for four years (1616–20) against frequent assaults from the Dutch. The representatives of both nations endeavoured to undersell one another and to form binding ties with the native powers. The Dutch asserted that they had linked to themselves by treaty almost all the petty rulers of the Moluccas; the English put forward a claim to priority of occupation dating from the famous voyage round the world of Sir Francis Drake, charging the Dutch with oppression and intimidation of the natives, while they zealously and with good reason combated the idea that a

[1] *A History of British India*, vol. i, p. 237.

few isolated and widely separated 'forts' amounted to genuine and effective occupation of the whole island group. Dutch power there was consolidated and regularized by the appointment of Pieter Both[1] (1609–14) as first Governor-General. The English Company in 1611, in a petition to the Earl of Salisbury (Lord High Treasurer), declared that they were 'enforced at last to break silence and complain their griefs'.[2] Continuous conferences in London and at the Hague (1611 and 1613–15) ended in failure to bring about a settlement, for though proposals for a union of the two companies were freely made, and it was even suggested that a joint subscription should be raised, the English looked with suspicion and dislike upon the heavy military expenditure of their rivals and, when called upon to share it, showed the strongest disinclination to do so. Meanwhile, open reprisals never ceased in eastern waters until, in July 1619, the English Company unwillingly came to terms with the Dutch, and entered into a union giving up their claims to compensation for past injuries. They engaged to share in the expenses of Dutch fortifications and to provide half of a fleet of defence of twenty ships which was to remain in the East for the purpose of patrolling the seas. In return for their acceptance of these onerous conditions, the English were grudgingly granted a certain proportion of the trade. The Company's assent to the treaty was largely due to the pressure put upon them by James I, who then, as always, was exceedingly ambitious of the renown of the peacemaker. The treaty was to be executed by a joint Council of Defence in the East, consisting of four members from each Company, with an appeal to the States-General of Holland and the King of England.

[1] This is the Dutchman who gave his name to the well-known rock in Mauritius. He was lost off that island in 1616. See vol. i of this series, 2nd edition, p. 146.

[2] *First Letter Book of the East India Company*, Sir G. Birdwood and W. Foster, p. 429.

The treaty was ill received by the Dutch in the East, who, under their able Governor-General Coen (the founder of Batavia in 1619), believed they had the English almost at their mercy. 'The English ought to be very thankful to you', wrote Coen, 'for they had worked themselves very nicely out of the Indies, and you have placed them again in the midst.'[1] Within two years the union had utterly broken down. The English were violently expelled from Lantor and Pulo Run (1621–2), and negotiations were resumed in London in 1621; but before the Dutch and English commissioners could come to any agreement, news arrived of the massacre of Amboyna in 1623, a bloody and brutal piece of work committed by a subordinate Dutch official, which put an end to all compromise and stirred up in England a deep and just resentment.

Van Speult, the Dutch Governor of Amboyna, arrested Towerson the English agent and eighteen other Englishmen besides several Japanese soldiers on a trumped-up charge of having conspired to seize the Dutch fort. There was no evidence against the prisoners at the time, except confessions drawn from them by fiendish torments and revoked immediately they were carried from the torture chamber. On the other hand there exists abundant proof in both the Dutch and English archives that the supposed plot was a mere figment of the imagination, if it were not a deliberate device to exterminate the English factory. Towerson and nine other Englishmen with nine Japanese were put to death; their papers and protestations of innocence were destroyed, but a few pathetic and broken sentences written on the leaves of Prayer Book or Bible or in the pages of a ledger escaped unnoticed, and served afterwards to inflame popular feeling in England to fury.

The action of Van Speult was not only a crime but a blunder, and the Prince of Orange openly declared that he

[1] *A History of British India*, Sir W. W. Hunter, vol. i, p. 384.

wished that 'when Speult began to spell this tragedy, he had been hung upon a gibbet, with his council about him'.[1] But in spite of intense popular excitement no real reparation was extorted from the Dutch till after the lapse of thirty-one years. James I, angered at the refusal of the Spanish court to favour his matrimonial plans for his son Charles, was inclining at this time for alliance with the Netherlands. Once again state policy was at variance with the aspirations of the Company, though at this time these aspirations were backed by the voice of the whole English people. Both James and his successor Charles I used brave words, but failed to follow them up with courageous action. The East India Company found a more worthy protector in Oliver Cromwell, who by the Treaty of Westminster in 1654 referred the question of claims and counter-claims to four commissioners, to be named on both sides, meeting in London, with an appeal on disagreement to the Swiss Cantons. The commissioners restored Pulo Run to the English, and awarded them a sum of £85,000 as indemnity for the Company, with £3,615 for the heirs of the sufferers at Amboyna.

In the East, Dutch sovereignty in the Spice Islands remained secure. Though the English continually reasserted down to 1667 a claim to Pulo Run, re-established a factory at Bantam in 1628 (which supported a troubled existence till 1682), and maintained a Presidency at Bencoolen in Sumatra till 1824, they never seriously challenged the position of the Dutch in the Malay Archipelago until Lord Minto's conquest of Java in 1811. Dominion in that region was denied them, but the door was opened thereby to a wider and more imperial destiny.

[1] *Calendar of State Papers, East Indies* (1622–4), ed. by W. N. Sainsbury, p. 331.

CHAPTER VI

EARLY SETTLEMENTS IN INDIA. THE COMPANY UNDER THE STUARTS, THE COMMONWEALTH, THE PROTECTORATE, AND RESTORATION

In the Spice Archipelago, as we have seen, the star of the English had waned before that of the Dutch. In the meantime the factors and agents of the East India Company in the face of many difficulties and discouragements were opening up trade with the ports of the mainland of India and endeavouring to obtain permission for the factories which their system of commerce rendered necessary. The failure of Captain Hawkins in 1608, through Portuguese opposition, to settle in Surat has been already mentioned. A different complexion was put upon matters by Best's victory in the sea fight off the mouth of the Tapti in 1612, and an English factory was permanently established there on a grant obtained from Jahangir by Thomas Aldworth, who pronounced it to be 'the only key to open all the rich and best trade of the Indies'.[1] A foothold once effected, commercial ties were gradually formed with the country inland, and subordinate agencies were established at Ahmadabad, Burhanpur, and, in the heart of the Mughal's dominions, at Ajmer and Agra.

The East India Company wisely determining to press home by all possible means the advantages they had gained, decided to send an ambassador 'of extraordinary countenance and respect' to reside at the court of the Emperor. Their

[1] *Letters received by the East India Company from its servants in the East*, vol. i, ed. by F. C. Danvers, p. 238.

choice fell upon Sir Thomas Roe as being 'of a pregnant understanding, well spoken, learned, industrious, and of a comelie personage'.[1] The sanction of James I for the appointment was then obtained—the more readily perhaps because the Company paid the ambassador's salary and allowances. Roe sailed in February 1615. On his arrival at Surat in September he discovered that Downton's victory over the Portuguese early in the year had only served to endanger the English cause in the eyes of the Mughal government. There was a strong party at the court of Jahangir, headed by Prince Khurram (afterwards the Emperor Shah Jahan), which favoured the Portuguese, and was now endeavouring to procure the expulsion of the English from Surat. Roe won the favour of Jahangir and lived at his court as accredited ambassador from the King of England for three years, at Ajmer, Mandu, or Ahmadabad. He failed to procure, as he had hoped to do, a formal and definite treaty, but he obtained permission for the establishment of factories at certain towns in the Mughal dominions, and did much, by his statesmanship and tact, to instil into the Mughal mind a respect for the English as a nation. Above all, he formulated a policy for the Company which they followed for seventy years, a policy which was to be unaggressive and wholly mercantile. Roe disliked the military-commercial policies of the Portuguese and Dutch, which he believed to consume all their profit. 'It is the beggaring of the Portugal, notwithstanding his many rich residences and territories, that he keeps soldiers that spend it, yet his garrisons are mean. He never profited by the Indies, since he defended them. Observe this well. It hath been also the error of the Dutch, who seek plantation here by the sword. They turn a wonderful stock, they prowl in all places, they possess some of the best; yet their dead payes consume all their

[1] *The Embassy of Sir Thomas Roe*, ed. by W. Foster [Hakluyt Society], vol. i, Introd., p. iv.

gain. Let this be received as a rule that if you will profit, seek it at sea, and in quiet trade; for without controversy, it is an error to affect garrisons and land wars in India.'[1] Roe served the Company well, claiming with truth 'my sincerity toward you in all actions is without spot; my neglect of private gain is without example, and my frugality beyond your expectation'.[2] He left India in February 1619.

The English factory at Surat henceforward became the chief English settlement in the East, even Bantam being made for a time subordinate to it in 1630. It was seriously affected by the depredations of Courten's association,[3] 1636–49, and by their rival factory at Rajapur, but recovered its position in 1657, remaining the headquarters of the Company in the East till its place was taken by Bombay in 1687.

On the eastern coast Captain Hippon in 1611 landed at Pettapoli in the Kistna delta, and proceeding northwards founded a factory at Masulipatam, a seaport of the Muhammadan kingdom of Golconda. For some years the factory flourished, but after 1624 declined before the opposition and 'foul injuries' of the Dutch. The English factors even abandoned the place in 1628, and, though they returned two years later, they cast about for another station where they might be unimpeded by European rivals. In 1640 Francis Day, a member of the Masulipatam council, procured from a petty Hindu raja a narrow strip of land about 230 miles south of Masulipatam with permission to build a fortified factory which he named Fort St. George. Round the guns of this protected factory grew up within a few years the town of Madras, divided into the White Town, or European settlement, and the Black Town, where the Indian merchants and weavers congregated. The Court of Committees at first looked askance at the expense involved in the new

[1] *The Embassy of Sir Thomas Roe*, ed. by W. Foster [Hakluyt Society], vol. ii, p. 344.

[2] Ibid., p. 343.

[3] See *infra*, p. 36.

settlement and entered the name of its founder in the Black Book which recorded the deeds of those servants who had incurred their displeasure. But Fort St. George soon justified its existence, and in 1642 it displaced Masulipatam as the chief settlement on the coast of Cōromandel, though it remained subordinate to Bantam till 1653, when it was raised to the position of an independent agency.

In the meantime the English, striking northwards, had made their first settlements in Orissa and Bengal. In 1633, Ralph Cartwright, sailing from Masulipatam, established stations at Hariharpur in the Mahanadi delta and at Balasore on the boundary between Bengal proper and Orissa. For many years the English only maintained their hold upon these places with the greatest difficulty, being fiercely assailed by the Portuguese and Dutch and decimated by the deadly exhalations of the malarial swamps. Indeed, it was only the foresight of Francis Day, the founder of Madras, which prevented the total abandonment of the Bengal factories in 1642. English prospects were much improved by the efforts of Gabriel Boughton, surgeon of the Company's ship *Hopewell*, who since 1645 had lived as court physician with the Mughal Subadar, or viceroy, of Bengal. In 1650 he obtained from his patron a licence for the Company to trade in the province, and in the following year an English factory was established at Hughli, where the Portuguese and Dutch were already settled. But misfortunes still dogged the Bengal stations. They were too far from Madras to be effectively controlled. The factors sent there fell into irregular and dishonest courses. In 1656 the Madras Council had determined to withdraw from Bengal altogether, but the arrival of new supplies and men in 1658, after Cromwell's charter, made them alter their decision. In the same year all the settlements in Bengal and on the Coromandel coast were made subordinate to Fort St. George.

Meanwhile, at home the Company's fortunes were under

a cloud. As a monopoly their claims aroused much opposition from the growing popular party in England. Their practice of exporting bullion was regarded as ruinous to the country, for the political economy of that day, says Sir William Hunter, 'was a compound of mediaeval tradition and national prejudice'.[1] Based as the Company was upon a royal charter, it might be expected that their reliance would be mainly upon the throne, but a Stuart king was only a broken reed. In fact, as Charles and the Parliament were rapidly drifting into a life-and-death struggle, the East India Company was likely to fare ill in the capacity of third party. There is noticeable a distinct attempt, and complete failure on their part, to prevail upon the Commons to include their grievances amongst those preferred by the popular party against the throne, and at other times to coerce the King by the threat to appeal to Parliament. In 1628 they laid a formal Petition and Remonstrance before the Commons which was disregarded. The rebuff from Parliament was followed by a still severer blow from Charles. In 1635, on the ground that the Company 'had merely intended and pursued their own present profit and advantage without providing any safety or settledness for establishing of traffic in the said Indies for the good of posterity',[2] the King granted a licence for trade in the East Indies to a courtier, Endymion Porter, who was financed by Sir William Courten or Courteen, a great London merchant, son of a Protestant Flemish refugee. The monopoly of the Company was for a time at an end. Courten's association did their utmost to secure an immediate profit without a too scrupulous regard for the rights either of their fellow countrymen or of the Hindu and Mughal traders with whom they had dealings. The Company petitioned Parliament again in January, 1641, but Charles persuaded them to recall their petition, admitting

[1] *A History of British India*, vol. ii, p. 20.
[2] Grant to Sir W. Courten, Dec. 12, 1635.

that 'Mr. Porter had nothing to do in the business, his name only being used, and that what was done was His Majesty's act'.[1] Courten's association established a settlement at Assada in Madagascar, whence the name of 'Assada Merchants' by which they soon became known. Meanwhile a renewed petition of the East India Company to the Long Parliament in June 1641 had been unnoticed, and the only action of that famous assembly in relation to the Company was to force the officers of their ships to take the Solemn League and Covenant. The ruinous competition between the two bodies was brought to an end in 1649 by a 'union' to which both sides reluctantly consented. In 1654 the original members of the East India Company desired to raise another joint stock while the Assada Merchants were in favour of converting the Company into a 'Regulated' one, i. e. of allowing members to trade individually with their own capital and ships. Both sides appealed to the Council of State, but for three years nothing was done. Cromwell indeed was credibly said in 1657 to have contemplated declaring the trade to India open, and the Company in despair threatened to withdraw from India altogether.[2] Their threat seems at last to have turned Cromwell's attention to the grievances they had pressed upon him so long. He granted them a charter in 1657. Under its provisions they raised the first permanent joint stock and 'the Company passed from its mediaeval to its modern basis'.[3] Ninety-one new factors and merchants were dispatched to the East, and the settlements there entered upon a new lease of life.

Based as it was upon the constitutional exercise of the royal prerogative, the Company had always been ill at ease under the Commonwealth and Protectorate. It had indeed,

[1] India Office Records, Court Book No. 17, p. 385.
[2] Ibid., No. 23, pp. 546, 556.
[3] *A History of British India*, Sir W. W. Hunter, vol. ii, p. 103.

when ordered to do so, effaced the royal arms upon its ships, and even, as we have seen, attempted to identify its cause with the cause of the Parliamentary Party, but that was only when all other expedients had failed.

With the Restoration came a welcome change in its fortunes. The twenty years 1660–80 may be regarded as the golden age of the Company while still a non-political, non-territorial trading body. Its stock steadily rose in price. It stood at 130 in 1669, 245 in 1677, 280 in 1681, and 360 in 1683. Dividends between the years 1659 and 1691 averaged 25 per cent. per annum. The Company at home enjoyed royal patronage and support, for if Charles II, like his father, borrowed money of the Court of Committees, he was, unlike his father, punctual in paying it back. The charters granted between the years 1661 and 1683 strengthened the position of the Company in many ways, giving it the right to coin money, erect fortifications, exercise jurisdiction over English subjects residing in the East, make peace or war, and form alliances with non-Christian peoples. The Company acquired the town destined to be the seat of its western Presidency through the marriage of the King with a Portuguese princess, Catherine of Braganza. She brought Bombay with the best harbour in India to Charles II as part of her dowry in 1661, to the despair of the viceroy of Goa, who wrote, 'India will be lost on the same day on which the English nation is settled in Bombay'.[1] Charles found the place an exceedingly unprofitable possession, and was glad in 1668 to hand it over to the East India Company at a rent of ten pounds a year, to be held, in quaint legal phraseology, 'as of the manor of East Greenwich in the county of Kent in free and common soccage'. Bombay gradually grew in fame and prosperity and succeeded Surat as the chief settlement on the west coast in 1687.

The Company's success during the first twenty years of

[1] *The Rise of Bombay*, S. M. Edwardes, p. 91.

the Restoration period was largely due to the fact that they were practically unmolested by European rivals. Charles II did indeed wage two wars with Holland in 1665–7 and 1672–4, but there was hardly any collision of the hostile forces in the East that was worthy of notice. By the Treaty of Breda, 1667, Pulo Run and some other places were finally relinquished to the Dutch in return for the far more valuable colonial possession (though its worth was not recognized at the time) of New Amsterdam, renamed New York. In India proper the Dutch mainly directed their operations against France, and so, without intending it, conferred a service upon England by checking at a very critical time the growth of the French Company.

After 1685 the East India Company once more entered upon a period of stress and difficulty. The early essays of the English nation in India had fortunately coincided with the reigns of the Mughal emperors who for about a hundred and fifty years gave political cohesion at least to northern India. During the latter part of the reign of Aurangzeb, the last of those able sovereigns, the empire was politically amidst the breakers. The provincial viceroys were getting out of the control of the central government; Sivaji the great Maratha leader, up to his death in 1680, had raided and plundered in open defiance of the supreme power. The wide extent of country over which he ranged may be gauged from the fact that in 1664 and 1670 he was driven with difficulty from the walls of the English factory at Surat after he had pillaged the town, while in 1677 he passed close to Madras on his way to the capture of Jinji. The result was a breakdown of that internal order and good government which was absolutely essential to a profitable trade. The English in Bengal were oppressed by the Nawab Shaista Khan (1664–77 and 1679–89). 'The whole kingdom', said Job Charnock in 1678, 'is lying in a very miserable feeble condition, the great ones plundering and robbing the

feebler'.[1] The change that had passed over the Indian scene is graphically described by Gerald Aungier in a striking dispatch, 'the state of India . . . is much altered of what it was; that justice and respect, wherewith strangers in general and especially those of our nation were wont to be treated with, is quite laid aside; the name of the honourable Company and the English nation through our long patient sufferings of wrong, is become slighted; our complaints, remonstrances, paper protests, and threatenings are laughed at, ... in violent distempers violent cures are only successful... the times now require you to manage your general commerce with your sword in your hands'.[2] To this general cause were added others more directly affecting the Company. A curious rebellion of Keigwin, the royalist commander of the garrison at Bombay, in 1683–4, and a rising in St. Helena, the 'Sea Inn' of East Indiamen (first occupied by the English in 1652 and finally taken from the Dutch in 1673), embarrassed the Company and brought their administration into evil odour at home as tyrannical. To meet these new conditions the Company, though with reluctance, determined to employ new methods. The advice of Gerald Aungier therefore fell on willing ears, and the Court of Committees groping in the dark and neither understanding the real weakness of the Mughal Empire nor the immense difficulties which as yet made their attempt hopelessly premature, resolved to declare war on Aurangzeb. Having definitely decided to break with the old traditions which had been laid down by Sir Thomas Roe and had served them since his time, their conversion was wholehearted. They expressed a new-born admiration for the 'wise' Dutch who were concerned less with trade than 'their government, their civil and military policy, warfare

[1] *Diary of William Hedges*, ed. by Sir Henry Yule [Hakluyt Society], vol. ii, p. 46.

[2] India Office Records, O. C. 4258.

and the increase of their revenue'.[1] They realized that the inevitable question would be put, 'Why cannot the Company now subsist with as small duties as they levied formerly?' and their answer was: 'They may subsist as they did, having their factories generally at the mercy of the Heathens among whom they lived.'[2] But the East India Company since the charter granted them by James II was in 'the condition of a sovereign state in India',[3] and no longer chose to live from hand to mouth. It was at this time (1687) that one of their dispatches contained the famous sentence so often quoted as a prophecy—truer than they could ever have guessed—of British destiny in the East; they urged their President and Council to 'establish such a Politie of civil and military power and create and secure such a large Revenue . . . as may be the foundation of a large, well grounded sure English Dominion in India for all time to come'.[4]

Tradition has largely associated this new departure with the names of two famous brothers, Sir Josia and Sir John Child. The former certainly wielded for many years an almost autocratic influence in the counsels of the Company at home, being four times governor between 1681 and 1687. Some letters of his still preserved in the Bodleian Library at Oxford[5] show clearly how all-powerful was his position in the Court of Committees, even at a later date than this (1692–4). His younger brother Sir John was President of Surat and Governor of Bombay, that is, really chief of the Company in India from 1682–90.

The policy thus valiantly and grandiloquently formulated ended in bitter disappointment. Captain Nicholson was

[1] India Office Records, Letter Book No. 9, Dispatch to Bombay, Sept. 11, 1689.
[2] Ibid., No. 8, Dispatch to Fort St. George, Jan. 14, 1686.
[3] Ibid., Sept. 28, 1687.
[4] Ibid., Dec. 12, 1687.
[5] Bodleian Library, Rawlinson MSS. A. 303.

sent from England with a fleet of ten armed vessels and a force of 600 men, to be reinforced by 400 taken on board at Madras. He was ordered to capture and fortify Chittagong on the north-eastern shore of the Bay of Bengal (though the Court of Committees believed it to be somewhere 'up the great Ganges'), as the future seat of the Company in those regions, to go to war with the King of Siam, and to capture Salsette from the Portuguese. Not one of these ambitious aims was realized. When the expedition arrived at Hughli in October 1686, hostilities broke out prematurely, and after the town had been bombarded the English retired twenty-seven miles down the river to a village called Sutanati, the site of the modern Calcutta. The Emperor now gave orders for a general attack on the English settlements. The factories at Patna, Cossimbazar, Masulipatam, and Vizagapatam were seized, and Bombay was besieged. Captain Heath was sent out from England with reinforcements, and in 1688 took on board all the English in Bengal with the Company's goods, bombarded and burnt Balasore and sailed to effect the conquest of Chittagong. But he found the place strongly defended and after a month of futile negotiations, made his way to Madras. There he arrived in March 1689. And so the consequence of the Company's spirited war policy was the evacuation of Bengal and the loss of the results of half a century's painful toil and effort.

The position of the English in India was only saved by their sea power. Sir John Child on the western coast seized all the Mughal shipping he could lay his hands on, and sent his captains to the Red Sea and Persian Gulf to arrest the pilgrimage traffic to Mecca. This bold stroke induced Aurangzeb at last to listen to overtures for peace, though the terms he conceded were harsh and contemptuous. In February 1690 he granted the English pardon and a new licence for trade, provided they paid a fine of £17,000,

engaged 'to behave themselves for the future no more in such a shameful manner', and that 'Mr. Child who did the disgrace, be turned out and expelled'. The English were spared this last humiliation, for Sir John Child, worn out with his exertions, had died earlier in the month, having, in the words of his employers, despite his final failure, 'done more for the Company and the honour of his country than ever any Englishman did in India'. The tale of disaster was relieved by one episode, the importance of which could not be realized at the time. Job Charnock, the English agent at Hughli, had twice since 1686 endeavoured to establish a settlement on the site of Calcutta, and had twice been forced to abandon it, when the open breach occurred with the viceroy of Bengal. At the conclusion of the peace the English were contemptuously granted permission to resume their settlements in the delta of the Ganges. And so after fifteen months' sojourn at Madras he made his way back almost unnoticed to his ruined settlement. The same year, therefore, which witnessed the abasement of the Company before Aurangzeb, also witnessed the humble foundation of a future capital of British India, the first step in the realization of the half unconscious prophecy of 1687.

CHAPTER VII

THE NEW EAST INDIA COMPANY

THE opponents of the Company in England inveighed against 'the unjust and wicked war with the Great Mogul',[1] and the news of the humiliating peace concluded in India gave them a welcome handle against the Court of Committees. Opposition to the East India monopoly had been growing for many years and took many forms. There was a considerable section which objected to the trade altogether for economic reasons that are not unknown at the present time. They disliked it because of the export of bullion which was its necessary concomitant, and because it imported manufactured goods and commodities which they supposed to be positively harmful, for instance coffee, which as a contemporary writer quaintly remarked was 'most useless since it serves neither for nourishment nor debauchery'.[2] Such opponents laid down the principle that no foreign trade was advantageous to the kingdom which did not export produce and manufactured goods and import raw materials. It is interesting to note that, if these specious arguments—which are often enunciated to-day—had prevailed, the incalculable advantage of the Indian trade would have been lost to England.

The Company's apologists in their attempts to answer these objections groped their way to a sounder economic theory which often anticipated the conclusions of Adam Smith and the Free Trade school. They declared stoutly that 'no

[1] *Some Remarks upon the present state of the East India Company's Affairs*, 1690.

[2] *Britannia Languens, or a Discourse of Trade*, 1680.

nation ever was or will be considerable in trade, that prohibits the exportation of bullion'.[1] It was a fallacy to regard bullion or specie as different from any other form of wealth, 'gold and silver and . . . money are nothing but the weights and measures by which traffic is more conveniently carried on than could be done without them'.[2] These writers objected to the whole principle of state interference in commercial matters, 'Laws to hamper trade whether foreign or domestic relating to money or other merchandizes are not ingredients to make a people rich. . . . No people ever yet grew rich by policies.'[2] 'Few laws relating to trade', wrote Davenant, 'are the mark of a nation that thrives by traffic.'[3] But they based the main defence of the India trade on yet wider grounds: 'Since the discovery of the East Indies, the dominion of the sea depends much upon the wane or increase of that trade, and consequently the security of the liberty, property, and protestant religion of this kingdom.'[1]

A second party were opposed simply to the Joint Stock theory and clamoured for a company on a regulated basis, i. e. one in which merchants traded on their individual capital as members of a guild.

Thirdly, a large and increasing number objected to the existing Company as resting on a too narrow and exclusive basis. When these men urged the dissolution of the Company, they only meant the winding up of the particular group of subscribers who had monopolized the trade since 1657, and there was little doubt that the Company might well have increased its capital and admitted a greater number to share its high profits. This section inveighed fiercely against the autocratic power which Sir Josia Child wielded in the Courts of the Company. In 1681 a prominent member of

[1] *A Treatise wherein is demonstrated, that the East India Trade is the most national of all foreign trades*, by Φιλόπαρις, 1681.
[2] *Discourses upon Trade*, Sir Dudley North, London, 1691.
[3] *An Essay on the East India Trade*, 1696 [by Charles Davenant].

the Court, Thomas Papillon, foreseeing the tendency of affairs, suggested that the Company itself should take the initiative by admitting more outsiders to a share in its privileges. But Sir Josia Child refused to accept the proposal and hounded Papillon and his associates out of the Company. 'The great Ministers and chief men at court fell in with Sir Josia', and he and his supporters 'do tumble the members in and out of the Committee according as they serve their own terms'.[1]

For many years individual 'interlopers' in India had defied the Company's servants, or acted in collusion with them; one of the most famous of the interlopers was Thomas Pitt, grandfather of the Earl of Chatham, who made a large fortune by unlawful, or, at least, unauthorized trading, and purchased a large landed estate together with the pocket borough of Old Sarum. These men had in vain attempted to get a pronouncement that the monopoly of the Company was illegal, in the famous trial of Thomas Sandys in 1683, when Judge Jeffreys decided for the Company. The only result seems to have been the charter of 1686, which strengthened the Company's power against both native chiefs in India and contumacious Englishmen, 'forming us', as Sir Josia Child triumphantly wrote, 'into the condition of a sovereign state in India'.[2]

The fall of the Stuart dynasty was a serious blow to Child. 'The Revolution', says Sir William Hunter, 'brought the Company face to face with Parliament.'[3] The London Company's numerous enemies associated themselves with the Whig Party, and as early as 1690 succeeded in inducing a parliamentary committee to pass a resolution in favour of a new Company. About this time they banded them-

[1] *Some Remarks upon the present state of the East India Company's Affairs*, 1690.

[2] India Office Records, Letter Book No. 8, Dispatch to Fort St. George, Sept. 28, 1687.

[3] *A History of British India*, vol. ii, p. 275.

selves together in an informal kind of association meeting in the Hall of the Skinners' Company in Dowgate Street. Parliament and the King in vain endeavoured to persuade the old Company to admit new members, and finally the Commons petitioned the Crown to dissolve the defiant corporation. So far from being intimidated Sir Josia Child expended over £80,000 in bribery among ministers and actually thus procured a new charter for the old Company in 1693. The result was, as might be expected, an outburst of great anger in the country and in the Commons. An interloper, Gilbert Heathcote, whose ship was seized in the Thames, voiced the national feeling when he declared, before a committee of the House of Commons, that 'he did not think it any sin to trade to the East Indies, and would trade thither till there was an Act of Parliament to the contrary'.[1] Parliament itself subscribed to this view and resolved, in 1694, 'that all the subjects of England have equal right to trade to the East Indies, unless prohibited by Act of Parliament'.[2] This resolution, which was promptly acted upon by many daring spirits, seriously invalidated the Company's position. In 1695 an inquiry was held into the Company's corruption. It was found that £107,000 had been expended between 1688 and 1694. These revelations caused a great sensation and brought about the political ruin of a minister, the Duke of Leeds.

At the very time that the Company was incurring disgrace from these damaging disclosures, an attack on their privileged position was made from an unexpected quarter, in the attempt of Scotland, still legally a separate and independent kingdom, though united under one crown, to win a share in the Indian trade. Nearly ninety years before, in 1617, James I had granted letters patent to Sir James Cunningham, one of his northern subjects, to trade to the East Indies,

[1] *Journals of the House of Commons*, Jan. 8, 1694.
[2] Ibid., Jan. 16, 1694.

but the London Company warded off the danger by buying him out. In 1693 the Scottish Parliament legalized the formation of associations for over-sea trade, and followed this up in 1695 by establishing the Company of Scotland, trading to Africa and the Indies. One of the leaders of the movement was William Paterson, the founder of the Bank of England. The names of the subscribers to the capital of £400,000, and the representative classes from which they were drawn, prove that the undertaking was essentially a national one. A Scottish pamphleteer of the day declared that Scotland had 'been most unmercifully cramped and fettered in its national liberties . . . till the late providential and happy revolution', and prayed that the harmonious working together of the English and Scottish Companies might be an inducement to all men to 'lay aside misplaced passion, . . . obliterate and bury in oblivion the distinguishing names of Scotch and English, and then voluntarily list themselves under the united banner of undivided Britain'.[1] But this generous dream was soon dispelled, and the episode of the Scottish Company was destined rather to embitter for many years the feeling between the two countries. However divided the English people might be as to the domestic question between their own Old and New Companies, they were at one in their opposition to possible rivals from the north. William III, as sovereign of both nations, was in an unenviable position, being bound either to disappoint the legitimate aspirations of one kingdom or to fall foul of the strong prejudices of the other. Both the English Houses of Parliament presented to him an address against the Scottish Company, and he rather weakly temporized by replying, 'I have been ill-served in Scotland, but I hope some remedies may be found to prevent the inconveniences which may arise from

[1] *A letter from a member of the Parliament of Scotland to his friend at London.*

this Act'.[1] The English Parliament next passed a violent resolution that the Directors were guilty of a high crime and misdemeanour, and should be impeached. But, in the end, it was their own ill-advised action that ruined the Scottish Company and freed the King from an embarrassing predicament. They were debarred from settling on territory belonging to a friendly power, but in spite of this they established a settlement on the Isthmus of Darien, which was claimed by Spain. The Spaniards protested, and the English government left the settlers to their fate, warning the English colonists at New York, Barbados, and Jamaica not to render them any aid. Disease and famine, combined with Spanish hostility, completed the ruin of the colony and brought about the fall of the Company.

In 1698 the members of the Dowgate Association, on raising a loan of £2,000,000 at 8 per cent. for Montagu, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, were incorporated under the name of the General Society. To this Society was granted the exclusive trade to India, saving the rights of the Old Company, which would expire after three years' notice, and saving also the private rights of those traders who had embarked for India on the strength of the Resolution of the House of Commons in 1694. The Old or London Company, to safeguard some of their privileges in the East India trade, subscribed £315,000 in the name of their treasurer, John Du Bois. The General Society was, in deference to the critics of the Old Company, established upon a regulated basis, which meant that the subscribers might trade individually to India, but the King was empowered to incorporate as many of such members as desired it into a joint-stock company, and undoubtedly such a development was contemplated from the very first. By far the greater number at once took advantage of this provision,

[1] *A Comprehensive History of India*, Henry Beveridge, vol. i, p. 369.

and were incorporated on September 5, 1698, as 'The English Company trading to the East Indies', controlled by a court of twenty-four 'Directors'. It must clearly be understood that, for the next few years, there were four classes of traders who possessed a legal right to trade to the East Indies. (1) The New English Company. (2) The Old Company, trading on their full capital until 1701 and after that on their limited subscription of £315,000 to the General Society. (3) Subscribers to the General Society who had refused to incorporate themselves in the joint stock of the New Company, and it must be remembered that after 1701 the Old Company ranked under this category. The capital of the separate traders, apart from the Old Company, did not amount to more than £22,000. (4) A few private adventurers, who had embarked in the trade to India after the Commons' Resolution in 1694 and before the incorporation of the General Society in 1698.

The private traders under the last two heads had little importance, and the real struggle for supremacy lay between the English and the London Company. It may be asked, why did not the state give the Old Company the statutory notice, enjoin them to wind up their affairs, and then allow the New Company to begin trading with India? To permit both associations to co-exist for three years, and wage internecine warfare with one another, seems at first sight a most impolitic course. But the truth is that it was, from a practical point of view, most undesirable that there should be any breach in the continuity of the trade. If left to themselves, the Old Company might have wound up their affairs so effectually as to sever the British connexion with India altogether. With all its disadvantages, the method adopted ensured a certain dove-tailing of one Company into the other. As early as October 1698 the Old Company write that their rivals' 'principal reliance is upon a new-fashioned word now

in vogue in all public places; they call it coalition, by which we think they mean that our stock should be joined to theirs, and we are so much for the public good of our country that probably it may come to that in due time, when their stock and ours meets about the same price'.[1] But in the meantime both parties manœuvred for position, and the struggle was fought out bitterly both at home and abroad before the stern logic of events drove them to amalgamate.

The Old Company at first staggered under the blow dealt them, but as 'veteran soldiers in this warfare'[2] they braced themselves bravely for the struggle. On taking stock of the position, they found it less desperate than they had supposed. They still had their forts and factories in the East, of which no Act of Parliament could deprive them, and the right for three years to carry on their business under the old conditions. After that date they could still, so they hoped, as members of the General Society, trade on the limited capital of £315,000 subscribed by them in the name of their treasurer. The only doubt was whether they could legally transfer to themselves as an association this sum, which still stood in the books of the General Society as contributed by John du Bois. To strengthen their position, they at once began to petition for an Act continuing them a corporation even after their existence as the 'London Company of Merchants trading to the East Indies' should be terminated.

On the other hand, the New Company, having begun by lending its capital to government, found considerable difficulty in raising new funds for commerce, and they were confronted with the arduous task of establishing themselves in the East in the presence of jealous rivals already in

[1] India Office Records, Letter Book No. 10, Dispatch to Madras, Oct. 28, 1698.

[2] Ibid., Dispatch to Bengal, Aug. 26, 1698.

possession. They decided to make their head-quarters in India at, or near, the chief seats of the Old Company, doubtless with the expectation of stepping into possession of their factories and buildings at the end of the three years' period. As their representatives, they sent out Sir Nicholas Waite to Bombay, Sir Edward Littleton to Bengal, and John Pitt to Madras, but they were unfortunate in their choice. All these men were dismissed servants of the Old Company, and they proved incompetent and faithless in their new service. The New Company, in opposition to the trade policy of fortified settlements, had deliberately adopted the plan of attempting to establish diplomatic relations with the Indian powers. They therefore not only selected Sir William Norris, member of Parliament for Liverpool, to go as ambassador to the Mughal Emperor, to win for them the same privileges from Aurangzeb that Sir Thomas Roe had procured from Jahangir for their predecessors, but they procured from the Crown commissions as King's Consuls for their Presidents. These commissions only helped to embroil the holders of them with the servants of the Old Company, who sturdily refused to recognize their validity, at any rate till the period of three years' grace had elapsed. The New Company's servants claimed that their credentials should be acknowledged from the outset, 'threatening imprisonment in irons and strange bugbear powers'[1] over those who refused to listen to them. 'All Englishmen whatsoever', wrote Norris, 'are under my care and protection',[2] a claim which his rivals treated with quiet contempt. They had no intention, they declared, 'of running under their consuls' wings for shelter and protection. We think our forts under the auspices of our sovereign, represented by His Majesty's flag flying upon

[1] India Office Records, Letter Book No. 10, Dispatch to Persia, Aug. 21, 1700.

[2] Ibid., Factory Records, Miscellaneous, No. XIX.

them, are much better securities than any pompous character of Consul, Deputy Consul, Vice-admiral, or the like titles.'[1]

On the whole, then, in India the Old Company, with its better equipped factories, longer experience, and more competent servants, proved superior in the struggle, though in Bombay disaster overtook them. There, Sir Nicholas Waite, a headstrong and meddlesome man, only succeeded in ruining his rivals' business without furthering his own. He embroiled Sir John Gayer, the Old Company's President, with the Mughal government, with the result that the factory at Surat was seized, all trade stopped, and Gayer himself imprisoned. In the other two Presidencies everything went in favour of the Old Company. In Bengal, which had been constituted a separate Presidency in 1699, Sir Edward Littleton, a dishonest and incapable person, was successfully kept at bay by John Beard, while in Madras, Thomas Pitt, the ex-interloper, but since 1697 President of Fort St. George, a man of original character and great ability, completely out-manœuvred his passionate and conceited cousin, John Pitt. Most calamitous of all was the complete failure of the embassy from which so much had been expected. Sir William Norris was far the most estimable of the men sent out by the New Company; he was honest, industrious, and conscientious, but he had none of the patient diplomatic ability necessary for success in the very delicate and difficult task on which he had embarked. He succeeded, after ruinous expense and much delay, in gaining an audience of the Emperor Aurangzeb, who was conducting a campaign against the Marathas, at Panalla, a fortress near Bijapur, but he found it impossible to obtain a commercial treaty, owing to the mischievous interference of Sir Nicholas Waite. The latter had, without

[1] India Office Records, Letter Book No. 10, Dispatch to Fort St. George, June 18, 1700.

any authority to do so, promised the Emperor that the New Company would take upon themselves the burden of defending from the pirates the waters of the Arabian Sea and Persian Gulf along the route followed by the Mughal ships carrying Muhammadan *pilgrims* to the sacred shrine of Mecca. This duty had hitherto been shared by the English, French, and Dutch together, and it was impossible for the ambassador to place the whole burden on the shoulders of the New Company. The Emperor made the acceptance of the duty of patrolling the seas a necessary condition of the grant of any privileges, and Sir William Norris returned to the coast baffled and deeply chagrined, to die on his passage home, worn out by his physical exertions and mental anxieties. The ruin of the embassy was due to the injudicious interference of Sir Nicholas Waite, the intrigues of the Old Company's native agents, the unfamiliarity of Norris with the dilatory and tortuous methods of Oriental diplomacy, the disturbed condition of the Mughal Empire at the time, and the natural failure of Aurangzeb to comprehend the opposing claims of the two Companies.

Meanwhile, at home, events had been tending towards an amalgamation. The New Company had long given up all hope of beating down their adversaries by force, and a union on favourable terms was the most for which they now looked. This solution of the deadlock was, however, postponed for a time by the fact that early in 1700 the Old Company succeeded in obtaining the coveted Act of Parliament enacting that they should be continued as a corporation after 1701, to trade to India on their subscription of £315,000 to the General Society. They exultingly claimed that this, with their Indian possessions, gave them all they desired; 'as it will give new vigour to our people, so it will clip the wings of that assumed authority the new gentlemen pretend to, and wherewith being grown giddy they know

not how to behave themselves'.[1] But the union was only postponed. The Directors of the New Company wrote in 1702, 'the loss we sustain by the India trade at present, and particularly from the coast (of Coromandel), has induced us not to decline entering into a treaty with the Old Company';[2] while their rivals, in spite of their Pyrrhic victory in the East, were driven to recognize that 'two sellers in India depreciate our Europe commodities, and two buyers there enhance India goods'.[3] Other causes contributed to the same end. War with France was impending—an obviously cogent reason for healing intestine strife in the East. The question of the Indian trade transcended for the time (especially during the elections of 1701) all other matters. Both sides intrigued, and spent money freely, scandalizing observers by the corruption they practised among the electors. The King and Parliament were anxious for a settlement, and put pressure on both Companies.

Accordingly a preliminary 'Instrument of Union' was signed in April 1702. The Old Company was ordered to purchase £673,000 additional stock in the General Society, to make its share equal to that of its rival. The houses, factories, and forts of the Old Company in India were valued at £330,000, those of the New at £70,000, and the New were called upon to pay £130,000 to the Old. The old twenty-four committees were superseded by twenty-four managers, twelve to be elected by each Company, who were to direct the trade from 1702. The factors of the two Companies in the East were directed henceforward to work together in unity, and in some cases presided over the settlements in rotation. A letter of the Old Company to their servants breathes the new spirit of hope and consolida-

[1] India Office Records, Letter Book No. 10, Dispatch to Persia, Aug. 21, 1700.
[2] Ibid., Letter Book No. 11, Dispatch to John Pitt, Jan. 8, 1702.
[3] Ibid., Letter Book No. 10, Dispatch to Madras, March 6, 1702.

tion: 'The present union having put a full stop to all your late competitions and struggles, and the trade to India being settled on the firm basis of an Act of Parliament and a large stock, we have a hopeful prospect that the same will in due time become more flourishing than ever, to the honour of our nation and the profit of the adventurers, and that we shall mutually concur to the retrieving the English reputation in India, which has severely suffered by the villainies of the pirates, the ill offices of our own countrymen, and the perfidiousness of the Moors (i. e. Muhammadans), who took advantage from both to oppress and lessen us.'[1] Naturally, however, there was still a good deal of friction among the English in India, and it was some time before the exhortations of the home authorities 'to bury all that is past in silence and forgetfulness'[2] were really carried out. Even at home the union was not finally completed till 1708, when all disputed points were finally settled by the award of Earl Godolphin. Henceforward there was but one Company, under the title of the 'United Company of Merchants of England trading to the East Indies'. This body received at intervals new charters prolonging the period of its monopoly, and though in time its sovereign powers were much curtailed, it continued its corporate existence till the cataclysm of the Mutiny brought about the abolition of its remaining privileges and the transference of its dominions and revenues to the Crown.

[1] India Office Records, Letter Book No. 10, Dispatch to Bombay, July 26, 1702.
[2] Ibid., Dispatch to Madras, March 5, 1702.

CHAPTER VIII

GROWTH OF THE SETTLEMENTS, 1708–1746
THE OSTEND COMPANY

AFTER 1708 the position of the East India Company at home was secured for many years, and in India there ensued a period of peaceful commercial development. That period is almost ignored by historians, who are naturally eager to press on to 1746, when the Company is drawn into the vortex of a European war, embroiled in conflicts with native dynasties, and itself becomes a territorial power. But from the colonial aspect these years require a somewhat closer attention. The English had established themselves in India when the Mughal Empire, at the height of its greatness, imposed order and peace over Hindustan, and claimed suzerainty even over the Deccan. Aurangzeb, the last great Emperor, died in 1707, the year before Earl Godolphin's award united the warring Companies in England. His reign had been a long one, and he had reduced the Deccan nominally to dependence—thus realizing the aim of all previous sovereigns, but in the process he had fatally weakened his own dominions. When he died, the Rajputs (whom he had alienated by his Muhammadan bigotry) were in arms, the Sikhs were causing trouble at Multan, anarchy was rampant in southern India, for he had destroyed the kingdoms of Bijapur and Golconda without being able to put anything in their place, and the Marathas, vanquished in tactics but conquerors in strategy, were roaming throughout western and central India, on the eve of that great development which was, within the course of the next

fifty years, to make them the most formidable military and political force in India, and to carry their arms to the banks of the Indus. Aurangzeb was succeeded on the throne of Delhi by a succession of rulers whose reigns were short and troubled. Henceforward, as the Frenchman Bussy, a keen observer, declared, the Mughal government was 'feeble with numerous forces badly led, and poverty-stricken with great wealth badly administered'.[1] The Viceroys or Subadars of the Empire for the most part left the capital to itself, and, when they were able to repel the Maratha onset, founded independent kingdoms for themselves out of the provinces they governed.

Though these political changes foreshadowed difficulties and dangers for the East India Company's settlements in the future, at this particular date they afforded conditions which were not altogether unfavourable. The English factories were already strong enough to maintain themselves against the local Muhammadan governors or coast rajas with whom they came in contact, and whereas they might have been exposed to the envy of a powerful emperor, the rulers of the newer semi-independent kingdoms set up in Bengal and southern India were less inclined to dread western influence, and often welcomed the resources they drew from their connexion with the traders from over the sea.

The English even took advantage of the now frequent revolutions at Delhi to legalize their *status* in India. In 1707, on the news of Aurangzeb's death, they hastened to strengthen Fort William in Bengal 'whilst there is an interregnum, and no one likely to take notice of what we are doing'.[2] In 1715 an embassy, under John Surman and Edward Stephenson, went from Calcutta to Delhi through country that was everywhere disturbed. There, after long

[1] *Mémoire pour le sieur de Bussy*, 1750, p. 17.
[2] C. R. Wilson's *Early Annals of the English in Bengal*, vol. i, p. 282.

delay and the exhibition of indomitable patience, they procured *Farmans* or signed privileges, which Orme afterwards described as the *Magna Charta* of the Company. Their success was largely due to the Emperor's gratitude to William Hamilton, surgeon to the embassy, who cured him of a dangerous illness. Certain villages near Calcutta and Madras were made over to the Company, and a formal recognition was given to the residence of its servants in India. The value of the concession was weakened by the fact that the Mughal authority itself was henceforward of little weight, except in northern India, but, as Burke afterwards declared, the East India Company in a legal sense now became an integral part of the empire of the Mughals. The embassy, at any rate, opened the eyes of the English to the hideous rottenness of the empire. The very present which they carried to the Emperor Farrukhsiyar had been prepared originally for Bahadur Shah, and was then destined for his successor, Jahandar Shah, but civil disorders had prevented any possibility of its being delivered to either. The envoys witnessed the revolt of a Mughal army in the streets of Delhi, they saw that the Emperor himself, whom they had addressed as 'absolute monarch and prop of the universe', to whom the Governor of Fort William was, in his own words, but as 'the smallest particle of sand . . . (with his forehead, at command, rubbed on the ground)',[1] was but a feeble *roi fainéant*, a mere tool in the hand of unscrupulous ministers.

The subject that bulks largest in the India Office records during the first thirty years of the eighteenth century is the struggle with the Ostend Company. After the revolt of the seven United Provinces of the Netherlands, the ten remaining ones had a very chequered history. They were alternately bandied to and fro between the power of Austria and

[1] *Early Annals of the English in Bengal*, C. R. Wilson, vol. ii, part I, p. iii.

that of Spain. At various crises in their fortunes they made attempts to procure a share of the trade to India. These attempts proved abortive, though one, in 1698, only seemed to fail of success through the death of Charles II of Spain and the outbreak of the war of the Spanish succession. For the next twelve years the Lowlands were converted into one vast battlefield, ever resounding with the tramp of European armies. The Peace of Utrecht in 1713 brought about a revival of commerce, and the subjection of the country to the house of Austria. In their new sovereign, Charles VI, the inhabitants of the Low Countries found a patron who was quite prepared, for reasons of his own, to support them in their efforts to obtain a share of the Eastern trade. The Emperor dreamt of establishing an Imperial mercantile marine on the profits of Indian commerce, which should form a counterpoise to the naval supremacy of the English and the Dutch.

The Ostend Company was not formally chartered, as we shall see, till 1722, but commissions for single vessels seem to have been granted as early as 1714, and in 1716 a proclamation was issued by the Prince of Wales, then acting as Regent in his father's absence, against the King's subjects trading to the East Indies under a foreign flag. Between 1718 and 1721, fifteen vessels sailed from Ostend to the East. Many renegade Dutch and English sea captains and factors, especially Jacobite exiles, took service with the Ostenders. For some time the trade continued under a kind of temporary association of merchants. Ships were fitted out at Lisbon and Leghorn as well as at Ostend, and, according to one authority, even cleared from British ports. The Emperor contemplated establishing stations for the Indian fleet also on the shores of the Adriatic at Fiume and Trieste, but this part of the scheme, at any rate, was not developed at this time.

Before long the Ostend merchants began to agitate for a

formal charter of incorporation. De Merveille, formerly a sea captain in the English service, is said to have been the first to present a scheme at the Imperial court. But the Emperor, on the advice of his ministers, and especially of Prince Eugene, Governor of the Netherlands from 1716–24, for a long time refused to entertain such a proposal, dreading the enmity of the maritime powers. England and Holland had indeed shown, in no uncertain manner, with what distrust they regarded the appearance of 'so ominous an invader'[1] as the new Company, in the Eastern world. It was found that Indian goods were being smuggled from Flanders into Great Britain. This contraband trade was carried on in large boats with ten or twelve oars, which rowed 'from Ostend to the river (Thames), and often at high water have run through bridge before the face of the custom-house officers'.[2] To prevent this, special Acts of Parliament were passed in 1719 and 1721, forbidding British subjects to trade to the Indies under commissions of a foreign state, and prohibiting any boat from rowing on the Thames, either above or below London Bridge, with more than four oars. This measure was followed by other Acts and proclamations threatening severe penalties against British subjects concerned in the Ostend ventures, and the letters of the Company for many years breathe stern denunciations against all who should be suspected of having any relations with the intruders.

But in 1722 the Emperor, against the advice of Prince Eugene and his ministers, decided to brave all opposition and grant a charter. An English merchant, Colebrook by name, is said to have been very prominent in procuring this important concession. The letters patent were issued December 22, 1722, though they were not published openly till the summer of the following year. The capital of the

[1] *Mr. Forman's letter to the Rt. Hon. Wm. Pulteney . . .*, 1725, p. 34.
[2] *The Importance of the Ostend Company considered*, 1726, p. 33.

Company was fixed at 6,000,000 florins. To attract foreign support, one clause in the charter provided that the shares of foreigners should not be liable to confiscation in the event of a war between Austria and their native country. Subscription books were opened at Antwerp on August 11, and by noon next day the capital was all subscribed, and at the end of the month the shares were up to twelve or fifteen per cent. premium.

So far the new Company had made a promising start, but the granting of the charter redoubled the opposition in Holland and England. The question of the Ostend Company became, for the next nine years, one of the thorniest of diplomatic problems. The charter was not publicly announced till August 1723, but the news had probably leaked out; in April, M. Bruyninx, the Dutch Minister at Brussels, presented a memorial of remonstrance to the Marquis de Prié, the Austrian Governor of the Netherlands. The protest of the Dutch was based upon the articles of the treaty of Munster (1648), by which Philip II, King of Spain, and at that time sovereign of the Netherlands, had practically renounced all part or lot in the Indian trade by the Cape route. The Dutch declared that the Austrian Netherlands continued under this prohibition by the terms of the Barrier treaty concluded at Antwerp in 1715. They had assisted Charles VI to claim the sovereignty over the southern Netherlands only on the footing of his right to the Spanish monarchy, and, therefore, he could hold these provinces no otherwise than the Kings of Spain had held them. It is clear that a somewhat subtle point of diplomacy was here raised; the clause of the treaty was in truth rather ambiguous, and, as a contemporary writer observes, 'it seems this treaty has two handles, and each (party) lays hold of that which is most for his purpose'.[1] The East India Company in England eagerly supported the Dutch;

[1] Boyer's *Political State of Great Britain*, vol. xxxi, p. 351.

they had the memorial translated and copies presented to the members at the door of the House of Commons. Pamphleteers of the day strove vigorously to raise the cry, even then losing much of its force, that Protestantism was in danger. If the Ostend Company succeeded, 'the commerce and riches of one of the bulwarks of the Protestant interest would be thereby transferred to augment the strength of a Roman Catholic state'.[1] Feeling in Holland had been so bitter that the States-General threatened the penalty of death against any Dutchman concerned in the Ostend trade. The prevalent opinion of the time certainly was that the question as between the Emperor and the Dutch could not be terminated without recourse to arms. But though the subject reappears in almost every European treaty for several years, and becomes a stock question of diplomacy, that pass was never reached. In 1725 the House of Commons resolved that the Treaty of Vienna, by which Spain, supporting Austria, opened her American ports to Ostend ships, was 'calculated for the entire destruction of the British trade', and a year later France and Holland joined England in a treaty denouncing the Company. The Emperor found the European opposition too strong, and the States of the Empire had little interest in the commerce of the Netherlands. Bavaria announced in 1726 that she would not regard as 'Imperial' any war waged for the Ostend Company. In the end, Charles sacrificed the Company and his own policy to his dynastic aims. To win the consent of the maritime powers to the Pragmatic Sanction conferring his hereditary possessions on his daughter, Maria Theresa, he agreed in 1727 to suspend the Company's privileges for seven years, and by another treaty with Great Britain, March 16, 1731, he bound himself to suppress the Company altogether, and promised never to

[1] *Mr. Forman's Letter*, p. 39.

permit vessels to sail to India from any country that had been subject to Spain in the reign of Charles II of England.

Attempts were made by the Company to re-establish itself on the Adriatic, at Trieste and Fiume, ports within the Empire which did not come under the prohibitory clauses of the treaty, but the scheme fell through. Failing this, recourse was had to other European powers. In 1728 Frederick IV of Denmark granted a special charter enabling many members of the suppressed Company to join his subjects in the Indian trade, and setting up an India House at Altona, a town belonging to the Danish Crown, but close to Hamburg, a free city of the Empire. Other members enrolled themselves under a new Swedish Company, chartered in 1731. The latter was left more or less undisturbed, because the commerce of the Swedes was rather with the further East, China and Japan, than with India. But in Denmark the British and the Dutch ambassadors were ordered to protest against the new association as being practically a revival of the Ostend Company, and, though Frederick denied their contention, the India House at Altona, after some delay, was closed.

The Ostend Company had always bulked more largely on the horizon of European politics than in the East itself; still, in spite of Carlyle's famous description of 'Karl VI's third shadow hunt, the mere paper Company which never sent ships, only produced diplomacies and had the honour to be', the Ostenders had not only traded in the Indian seas, but had founded two settlements, at 'Bankibazaar' [i.e. Bankipore] on the Hughli and Covelong or Coblon near Madras. The number of vessels sent out had been steadily increasing up to the suspension of the Company, and good dividends had been paid.

But in India the Company had to deal with implacable rivals. The English merchants in Bengal, spurred on by promises of indemnification at home, endeavoured, even

before 1727, to seize and imprison Hume, the renegade Englishman who had been appointed Chief of Bankipore, and, as they afterwards admitted, 'had gone some lengths that are not so proper to be committed to Black and White'.[1] From the beginning the Dutch had not scrupled to capture Ostend ships, and after the Company was abandoned by the Emperor, its settlements soon came to ruin. The English seized a vessel in the Ganges in 1730, and a squadron commanded by Captain Gosfright blocked up two more 'so that they can never come away'.[2] Finally, in 1733, the Bengal government stirred up a Muhammadan official to attack Bankipore, the isolated station, which was still garrisoned by fourteen persons. They made a despairing resistance, but were obliged to surrender, and were conveyed back to Europe. The Covelong factory existed some years longer. The Company was not legally defunct till 1793.

So ended the ill-fated Ostend Company. To contemporaries it seemed as though a formidable hydra had been slain. 'If one considers seriously', says an observer in 1731, 'the course of the many and various transactions of Europe for these eight or ten years past, it will appear a little strange, and yet very certain, that the charter granted by his Imperial Majesty to the Ostend Company has been the original cause of all the jumble that has ensued among the Princes of Europe, and the difficulties that have occurred in reconciling again their several jarring interests. After that obstacle was once removed, we see how soon the Public tranquillity has been restored.'[3] The crippling of the Company marked the triumph of the narrow policy of restriction and monopoly typical of the century, fortified, in this instance, by national jealousy. Within a few years, enlightened statesmen had begun to see that England's action

[1] Letter of Henry Frankland, Governor of Bengal, 1727.
[2] Boyer's *Political State of Great Britain*, vol. xl, p. 305.
[3] Ibid., vol. xlii, p. 143.

in the matter was not only selfish, but of doubtful expediency. 'The abolition of the Ostend Company', said Pitt in 1742, 'was a demand we had no right to make, nor was it essentially our interest to insist upon it, because that Company would have been more hostile to the interests both of the French and Dutch East India Companies than to our own.'[1]

The further history of the three Presidencies must be very briefly summarized until the outbreak of the war of the Austrian succession, when the French attack on Madras inaugurated a new era in the Company's history. The period was one of growth and consolidation. The Company drove a steady and prosperous trade, subject to normal fluctuations.

The war of the Spanish, unlike that of the Austrian, succession left the Indies almost untouched. Operations were confined wholly to the sea, and apart from uneasiness as to the fate of outgoing and incoming ships, nothing was feared from the French. In the whole course of the war, 1702–13, the Company do not seem to have lost more than seven ships. In March 1712, runners were posted on the road between Madras and Calcutta, and were kept in constant pay, that quick and speedy advices might reach Bengal of any French ships sailing up the coast. But how little the war affected the settlements themselves may be seen from the fact that in 1712 the English at Fort St. David, being at war with the Raja of Jinji, requested the mediation of M. Hébert, the French Governor of Pondicherry. The latter hesitated at first, the two nations being still at war, but finally he consented to act, and brought about a settlement.

In Bengal, the European settlers felt less than in either Bombay or Madras the effects of the failure of Mughal power. The Emperor exercised some sort of control over the Subadars or Nawabs of Bengal for a longer period than over his viceroys elsewhere, though at the end of the period they

[1] *Earl of Chatham's Speeches*, 1853.

too were practically independent. The Nawabs themselves were men of some ability, and under Murshid Kuli Khan 1713–25, Shuja Khan 1725–39, and Ali Vardi Khan 1741–56, the province enjoyed, according to native standards, good government and internal peace. The English in Calcutta, though they complained bitterly from time to time of the exactions levied on their trade by the Mughal officers, lived on good terms with the Nawabs. The building of Fort William, which was begun in 1696, was completed about 1715. After the end of the rotation government[1] in 1710, the trade of the settlement steadily grew. The commerce of Bengal, consisting of silks, muslins, saltpetre, sugar, opium, rice, jute, and oil, was the most valuable in India. Round the English factory, warehouses, godowns, and fort, there grew up a prosperous native town, with a population that was estimated at 100,000 by 1735, while the broad pool, almost deserted when Charnock first anchored there, was thronged with shipping.

On the western coast of India, Bombay felt more acutely the effects of the breakdown of Mughal rule. The Marathas were now steadily extending their power northwards from Maharashtra, the home of their origin, and occupying the hinterland of the Portuguese and English settlements. The descendants of Sivaji still ruled nominally at Satara, but their palace was practically a royal prison, for all real power had passed to their ministers, the Peshwas, who made their office hereditary and established their dynasty at Poona. The English and Portuguese on the western coast forgot their old enmity, and drew together in face of the common peril. In 1731 Bombay sent a reinforcement of 300 sepoys to Goa, but they found themselves unable to offer further help, since Portuguese affairs in India were 'in a very declining if not desperate and irretrievable condition'.[2] In

[1] See *supra*, p. 58.
[2] *Bombay Gazetteer*, vol. xxvi, part I, p. 194.

1738 the Marathas captured Bassein, twenty-eight miles north of Bombay. On the sea, the famous corsair chief, Kanhoji Angria, preyed on all the shipping of the coast from Bombay to Goa, darting forth from the creeks and harbours where he had established his strongholds, with his swift sailing ships and oared galleys, called *grabs* and *gallivats*. He had originally been the commander of the Maratha fleet, but, as generally happened with Maratha leaders, he soon made himself independent. At first he only attacked Mughal shipping, but later he ventured, sometimes in alliance with Taylor, England, and Plantain, the notorious pirates of Madagascar, to assail the largest East Indiamen. Attacks were made in vain on his chief stations in 1717, 1718, 1720, and 1737, but his capital at Gheria defied not only the Company's fleet, but (in 1720) a royal squadron, till it was finally captured by Clive and Watson in 1756. Angria himself died in 1728 or 1730 (the date is uncertain), but his sons continued his lawless sway, one at Kolaba and the other at Sevendrug. Bombay, thus fiercely assailed, remained weak for the first eighteen years of the eighteenth century, and her trade greatly suffered, but from that date a steady improvement set in. In 1744 her population was estimated at 70,000. Though unable to afford much help to the Portuguese, she developed, in the invigorating atmosphere of opposition, a strength to meet the attacks of her enemies, and by 1746 she was the strongest of the Presidency towns from a military point of view. 'It sadly concerns us', wrote the Court of Directors, 'to find you have such occasion for warlike forces by sea and land on your side of India.'[1] But Bombay, in spite of protests from home, developed her Indian navy, and in 1737 her land forces amounted to over 2,600 men, including 750 Europeans, a much larger garrison than was maintained at this time at

[1] India Office Records, Letter Book No. 16, Dispatch to Bombay, Feb. 27, 1719.

either Calcutta or Madras. Inch by inch the Company's servants resisted the danger; successively they had allied themselves with the *Sidi*, the Mughal admiral, against Angria, with one of Angria's sons against the other, and with the Portuguese against the Marathas; finally, in 1739, they concluded the first British treaty with the Marathas themselves, by which the Peshwa conceded free trade to the Company throughout his dominions.

Madras had been profoundly affected by the results of Aurangzeb's campaign in the Deccan, 1683–7. The last spasmodic efforts of the old Emperor brought to ruin the southern kingdoms of Golconda and Bijapur, but left nothing in their place. 'The governments which had in some degree kept up order in the Deccan being annihilated, the frame of society which depended upon them was dissolved, and the scattered materials remained as elements of discord.'[1] The disbanded armies of the two conquered kingdoms either joined the Maratha Sambhaji or wandered plundering in scattered bands. It is true that Sambhaji fell, and that from 1700–4 the Emperor gradually reduced the Maratha forts, but by that time his efforts were exhausted; with complete disorder in his finances, and his soldiers 'croaking like crows in an invaded rookery'[2] for pay, he made no further advance, and when he died, in 1707, the Deccan was still in a state of complete disorder. Thomas Pitt seized the opportunity in September 1708 to obtain from the Nawab of the Carnatic a grant of 'five towns' in the neighbourhood of Madras. But for some years the Company were unable to occupy them permanently, for the Nawab afterwards revoked his grant. The surrender of these five towns or villages was one of the results achieved by Surman's embassy, but even when the *farman* arrived at Madras in 1717, the English found it necessary to fight their way into one of them at the

[1] M. Elphinstone's *History of India*, 1866, p. 654.
[2] Ibid., p. 669.

point of the bayonet. This high-handed manner of carrying out the Emperor's grant contrasts strangely with the stately reception accorded to the actual *farmans*, the salute of 151 guns from the fort and the broadsides of every vessel lying in the roads.

All control over southern India soon passed out of the Mughal's hands. In 1713 Asaf Jah (afterwards known as Nizam-ul-Mulk) was appointed Subadar of the Deccan. Though recalled for a time, he re-established himself in 1723, and became independent of Delhi in all but name. There now ensued a long duel for power in the Deccan, between the Marathas and Nizam-ul-Mulk. The policy followed by the English during this troublous time was to keep on good terms with the Nizam, and slowly strengthen their fortifications. Various presents and complimentary letters were sent to Hyderabad during the struggle with the Marathas, as the issue swayed backwards and forwards. No doubt the even nature of the long conflict was a great gain to the English at Madras. Neither side had leisure to notice the quiet, imperceptible strengthening of the Company's settlement. On the Coromandel coast, a strong native dynasty established itself in the Carnatic, the narrow strip of territory between the mountains and the sea, bounded by the Kistna on the north and Tanjore on the south. These rulers owed a submission that was little more than nominal to Nizam-ul-Mulk, himself in theory the representative of the Mughal in the Deccan, who reigned over what was practically an independent kingdom at Hyderabad. Sheltered, as it were, behind this double rampart of stable government, the English at Madras plied a peaceful commerce, remaining on excellent terms with both the ruler of the Carnatic and his overlord, the Subadar of the Deccan. But towards the end of the period, the political equilibrium of southern India was upset by the Marathas, who pressed hard against the Nizam, and in 1740 burst into the Carnatic, slaying the

reigning Nawab, Dost Ali, in a pitched battle. The English at Fort St. George began to tremble for their safety, but could look with satisfaction on a stronghold which now mounted 193 guns. In 1741, while the main army was besieging Trichinopoly, straggling bands of Maratha horsemen plundered up to the very borders of Fort St. David. The success of the invaders was but temporary, and in 1743 the Nizam recovered control of the Carnatic. Four years before, Bombay had concluded a treaty with the Peshwa, and in 1742–3 the inhabitants of Calcutta hastily threw up the famous 'Ditch', on the news that the Marathas had defeated Ali Vardi Khan, the Subadar of Bengal, and plundered the outskirts of Murshidabad. The great Hindu confederacy of marauders was therefore, about the same time, approaching all the Presidency towns of the Company on the western, south-eastern, and north-eastern shores of India, a premonitory sign that the era of peaceful commerce was drawing to a close.

In the whole of this period, there were few men of striking personality among the English. During thirty-six years (1708–44) there were seven presidents of Bengal, seven governors of Bombay, and twelve presidents of Fort St. George; yet out of this number only two men, both presidents of Madras, Thomas Pitt and the Scotsman, James Macrae (1725–30), have found a place in the *Dictionary of National Biography*. But if few were distinguished, few perhaps were incapable. Surman's success at Delhi was the due reward of a dogged perseverance which refused to be discouraged by any check. The political situation which the Company's servants had to face was a terribly difficult one: an empire sinking into decrepitude, great nobles carving for themselves kingdoms out of the remnants, and, most formidable of all, the rise of the turbulent military state of the Marathas, with all its resources devoted to predatory war.

CHAPTER IX

THE LIFE OF THE ENGLISH IN THE EAST

BEFORE passing on to the political history proper of the East India Company, it is desirable, in a narrative which regards the eastern empire in its colonial aspect, to say something of the daily life lived by our countrymen in India.

The Company's servants after 1676 passed through a regular gradation of rank as apprentices, writers, factors, merchants, and senior merchants. The factory was a compact little nest of buildings, consisting of the lodgings of the Chief or President and his subordinates, warehouses, godowns, and offices, the whole surrounded by the ramparts of the 'fort'. Originally no provision was made for family life. Even the chiefs were rarely accompanied by their wives, and the others were not expected to marry. This procedure directly contrasts with that of the French Company, which definitely from the first proposed to establish colonies. The factory was the commercial counterpart of a University college. Meals were taken in common till about 1720; there were daily prayers, and the gates were closed at stated hours. The President was given disciplinary control over the younger members, and fines were imposed for breaches of rules or misconduct, such as drunkenness, dicing, brawling, or insubordination. From the first, considerable state was kept up. The governors of the settlements only moved abroad with flags, trumpets, and the firing of salutes.

The common custom of speaking of the Company's settlements prior to 1746 as mere factories is erroneous. The

English had not yet acquired provinces, but they ruled over towns with heterogeneous populations, consisting of Muhammadans, Hindus, and Europeans trading under the Company's licence. As early as 1671 Bombay was definitely styled a 'colony' in a dispatch from India, and it was in regard to that settlement that the Company first consciously aimed at establishing something more than the factory with which they had been formerly content. Soon after its acquisition they sent out twenty single women of 'sober and civil lives', engaging to keep them for a year and provide them with one 'suit of wearing apparel'.[1] Unfortunately, we hear later that some of these women 'are grown scandalous to our nation, religion, and government'. The authorities at Bombay were bidden to 'give them all fair warning that they do apply themselves to a more sober and Christian conversation, otherwise the sentence is this, that they shall be confined totally of their liberty to go abroad, and fed with bread and water till they are embarked on board ship for England'.[2] From this time the Court began to allow and even to encourage Englishmen not of the Company's service to 'trade up and down in India', and they declared (in 1687) that their policy was to make 'our towns replete with people and marts for all nations'.[3] A contemporary tract (1681) speaks of many hundreds of families (though here there is probably some exaggeration) enjoying free liberty of trade to and from all ports and places in India.[4] This development brought with it dangers of its own, and the new heterogeneous populations were not so easily controlled as the old Factory house. Sir Edward Winter, a governor of Fort St. George, being reduced to

[1] India Office Records, Court Book No. 26, p. 183.

[2] Letter of Surat Council to Bombay, Dec., 1675.

[3] India Office Records, Letter Book No. 8, Dispatch to Fort St. George, Sept. 28, 1687.

[4] *A Treatise wherein is demonstrated that the East India trade is the most national of all foreign trades . . .*, by Φιλόπατρις, 1681.

Second in Council by the Court in 1665, and having refused to vacate his office, seized and imprisoned Foxcroft, his successor designate, on the plea that he had betrayed Roundhead and Republican sympathies. He only submitted, and made a compromise with the Company, when they despatched five armed ships to blockade their own settlement in 1668.

The Court of Committees also began to perceive that the scope of their servants' energies in the East was widening. In 1687 they appointed a candidate, one of many aspirants, as member of Council, at Fort St. George, because he was 'a man of learning and competently well read in ancient histories of the Greeks and Latins, which with a good stock of natural parts only can render a man fit for government and political science, martial prudence and other requisites to rule over a great city'. 'For', as they added, '. . . its not being bred a boy in India, or staying long there and speaking the language or understanding critically the trade of the place, that is sufficient to fit a man for such a command as the Second of Fort St. George is, or may be, in time, though all these qualifications are very good in their kind'.[1]

The development of the Company's positions in India from the *status* of factories to that of quasi-colonies may be said to have gone on pretty continuously all this time, under the leadership of Sir George Oxenden (1662–9), Gerald Aungier (1669–77), and Sir John Child (1682–90), the representatives of the East India Company in western India, holding the two offices of the presidency of Surat and the governorship of Bombay; of Sir Streynsham Master (1677–81), and Elihu Yale (1687–92), Presidents of Madras; and of William Hedges (1681–84), Governor of the factories in Bengal, which from the date of his appointment were made independent of Madras. Aungier especially did much to enlarge the precincts of the old factory by the foundation of

[1] India Office Records, Letter Book No. 8, Dispatch to Fort St. George, Sept. 28, 1687.

a hospital, a church, a gaol, and courts of justice at Bombay. In 1688 the Directors ordered the establishment there of a Post Office. In the same year a municipal government consisting of a mayor and ten aldermen, three to be Company's servants, three Portuguese, and seven natives, was established at Madras. This policy was carried further in 1726, when a royal charter provided for the establishment of a mayor's court at each of the Presidency towns for the trial of civil actions.

Colonel Yule, in his *Diary of William Hedges*, has thrown a flood of light upon the social life of the first century of the Company's history. A few later extracts from the records may here be given to show the condition of the settlements from 1700 to 1750. In 1711, rumours had reached Leadenhall Street that there had been much insubordination among the junior factors at Fort St. George, and that recourse had been had to the most drastic measures for maintaining order. 'We are sorry to hear that of late there has not been a sufficient decorum kept up among our people, and particularly among the young writers and factors, that there has (*sic*) been files of musketeers sent for to keep the peace at dinner time.' The theory of the factory always presupposed that the Head of it should exercise a kind of paternal control over the younger members, and the Directors went on to suggest a system of discipline: 'We direct that you the President and Council, do at certain stated seasons set apart a time to enquire into the behaviour of all our factors and writers, . . . and calling them severally before you, let them know the account you have of them, and as they deserve either admonish or commend them . . . It lies very much in your power to form their minds to virtue.'[1]

At a time (1714) when in England any gentleman might be called on to defend his life against every swaggering

[1] India Office Records, Letter Book No. 14, Dispatch to Fort St. George, Jan., 1711.

bravo who chose to insult him, the Court were stringent in their prohibition of the practice of duelling. 'You have done exceeding well', runs a letter to Bencoolen, 'in discountenancing that intolerable practice of Inferiors challenging their Superiors, or others their Equals; howsoever that practice is winked at in the camp, it must never be cherished or connived at in the factory or Counting House, and on the other hand to prevent the temptation, if any person abuses or affronts another let it be made a standing rule, and Public notice given that it is so, that you will do the complainant justice'.[1]

Intemperance in the East brings a swift and terrible retribution with it. The Directors are never tired of dwelling on its evil effects. The settlement at Bencoolen in Java seems to have been notorious for drunkenness. We find the following counsel given in 1717:—

'Could we once hear Sobriety was become as fashionable on the West Coast as hard drinking hath been, we should entertain strong hopes that your new settlement at Marlborough . . . would give a better reputation to the West Coast than it hath hitherto had on account of health . . . it is positively affirmed you have good water, if you will be at the pains of fetching what is so; it is further said that a little tea boiled in the water doth admirably correct it, and that water kept till cold and so drank as water would contribute to the health of those who used it'.[2]

But apparently this excellent suggestion to substitute cold tea for more generous potations had not the effect desired, for the next year the Directors, in commenting on the accounts of the steward of the factory, indite the following scathing passage:—

'It is a wonder to us that any of you live six months to

[1] India Office Records, Letter Book No. 15, Dispatch to Bencoolen, Oct. 27, 1714.

[2] Ibid., Letter Book No. 16, Dispatch to Bencoolen, Feb. 6, 1717.

an end, or that there are not more quarrellings and duellings among you, if half the liquors he charges were really guzzled down.' Reference is then made to that 'monstrous expense of July . . . we find the amount to be seventy-four dozen and a half of wine, of which 8 dozen and 5 were double bottles, and 50 dozen and 5 single bottles of French claret, 24½ dozen of Burton Ale and Pale Beer, two pipes and 42 gallons of Madeira wine, six flasks of Shyrash (Shiraz), 274 bottles of Toddy, three leagers (i. e. casks) and ¾ of Batavia Arrack, and 164 gallons of Goa'. They go on to state that this amount was consumed *among nineteen persons*, of whom some had diet money besides; 'you tell us . . . that all are now diligent, no drunkenness or revelling are permitted, all the candles are out and all gone to rest before ten at night, good order and economy kept up, and as few disorders as can be expected, and no other contentions among you but who shall excel—we suppose you mean in serving us best—and . . . you say none of the covenant servants are out of order, which is owing to the regular living and good table you keep. Doth the above expense and these fine characters agree? Be yourselves, when sober, the judges.'[1]

Another grievance of the authorities at home was the amount of powder sometimes wasted in salutes. It is said that a Portuguese ship once emptied her magazine in complimentary salvoes, and when war broke out and she met an enemy on the open seas, her guns were of necessity silent. Among the French Company's servants the practice of saluting was carried to an almost grotesque extent, and every movement of the governor was accompanied by the roar of artillery. In like manner, we find the settlers of St. Helena not proof against this weakness; they expended their masters' powder not only on every public occasion, but on festivals of a purely private and domestic nature.

[1] India Office Records, Letter Book No. 16, Dispatch to Bencoolen, March 14, 1718.

'We directed for every ship of ours that comes in or departs, generally seven or nine guns, and (yet) when the fleet went away in July 1712, there is 385 pounds weight of powder charged as expended, and 134 guns fired, of which six and twenty of your greatest guns on the place. These, we think, too much, and for the future expect better husbandry. . . . We allow the number of guns fired on the days of public solemnity, such as the Queen's birthday, coronation day, etc., but can't do so for others, such as twenty guns for Mrs. Mashborne's, the same at Mr. Hoskinson's funeral, one and twenty guns at Mr. Mashborne's wedding, and the same at the governor's landing, these are too many, a smaller number ought to serve.'[1] In addition to drunkenness and wastefulness, gambling was a besetting sin of the English in India, both men and women. In 1721 a letter to Madras ran as follows :—

'It is with great concern we hear the Itch of gaming hath spread itself over Madras, that even the gentle-women play for great sums, and that Capt. Seaton makes a trade of it to the stripping several of the young men there. We earnestly recommend to you to check as far as you can that mischievous evil. Let Capt. Seaton know if he continues that vicious practice he shall not stay but be removed, and do you take care he be sent off the shore, . . . and civilly acquaint the gentle-women that we desire they will put a stop to all high gaming, because first or last it will be prejudicial and ruinous to them or theirs.'[2]

Thirty years later we find the Court still complaining that 'the pernicious vice of gambling has spread like a contagion among all ranks and degrees of our servants',[3]

[1] India Office Records, Letter Book No. 15, Dispatch to St. Helena, March 5, 1714.
[2] Ibid., No. 17, Dispatch to Fort St. George, April 26, 1721.
[3] Ibid., No. 27, Dispatch to Fort St. David, Jan. 12, 1750.

and dismissing two men in high office (one, Governor of Fort St. David) for their indulgence in the practice.

From the beginning of the Company's history the Directors had to exercise vigilance against the private trading of their servants in India, and they were especially severe on the Presidency of Bengal, always the richest, and therefore the most suspected, settlement. They refer to 'the old Bengal doctrine to amuse us with good words',[1] and again, to 'the Bay Proverb, "Self and then Company"'.[2] But the ingenuity of some men, especially those in high places, found means to keep within the letter of the law and yet defraud the Company. A governor of St. Helena took the Company's slaves from their work on the plantations, to mend the paths over the rocks to his house, and carry himself and his friends up and down in sedan chairs. Further, he 'has built a shed of 400 feet long, for no other use than that he may ride therein on his asses, and be covered from the weather . . . and he has wasted a great deal of our timber therein'. Again, 'the charge of the new path hath and will cost us £1,000 . . . a banqueting house is to be made, half-way up, and a place for nine-pins'; he had also employed labour for months to build a 'tomb of ten foot high and seven foot broad of cut stone . . . for his wife'. The Directors had perhaps a right to feel annoyed, for the governor had charged this to the Company as fortifications.[3]

The East India Company, during the first half of the eighteenth century, employed slave labour on a large scale. For instance, in 1735, at St. Helena, it possessed 180 slaves, and the free planters, 458. In 1735, orders were given to provide 250 for Bombay, while in 1751 the Direc-

[1] India Office Records, Letter Book No. 19, Dispatch to Bengal, Jan. 29, 1742.
[2] Ibid., No. 15, Dispatch to Bengal, Jan. 12, 1715.
[3] Ibid., No. 15 and No. 16, Dispatches to St. Helena, March 5, 1714, and Feb. 22, 1717.

tors wished to buy 600 for Fort St. George. At the small settlement of Bencoolen, in 1712–13, there were 189 slaves. Most of them came from Madagascar. There was a regular tariff for luckless humanity in that island, perhaps the scene of greater continuous misery than any other spot on the surface of the globe. The price of a man was 'one Buckaneer (a kind of primitive cannon), one trading gun, one large bamboo of powder of between four and five pounds weight, fifty shot and fifty flints'. A woman was worth 'two trading guns, two small bamboos of powder, thirty shot and thirty flints'.[1]

Regulations were drawn up for the transport and care of the slaves. On arrival from Madagascar at Fort St. George, the President of that place was to pay the Company's agents twenty shillings a head, and the surgeon five shillings a head for every slave delivered alive. A committee was to be appointed to consider 'of the properest measures for rendering them (the slaves) most useful to us, as likewise to regulate their habitation, diet and clothing, in such a manner as may best contribute to their health, and make their servitude easy to them. What occurs to us as necessary on this occasion are, that they be lodged together in a convenient place, under the particular inspection of some trusty person or persons; . . . that the soldiery and others be not permitted to have any intercourse with them; . . . that their diet and clothing be ascertained which is to be reasonable and fully sufficient for them; that the slaves be acquainted with the particulars of their said diet and clothing; that if they are not duly supplied therewith, they may on complaining to you have justice done them; that they be attended when sick, by our surgeons, with as much care as the soldiers.'[2]

A proclamation was issued at St. Helena that the gover-

[1] India Office Records, Letter Book No. 23, p. 20.
[2] Ibid., No. 28, Dispatch to St. Helena, Nov. 14, 1751.

nor and council would 'let out any of our black children to such as would keep them for their labour till they were ten years old'. The Directors at home gave this scheme their approval, and added a suggestion, 'You should enter in consultation, what children were so put out, to whom, and for how long time; by this means there would be a register and remembrance when to call for them again.'[1] When grown up they were to be taught a trade: 'Remember that Mr. Pyke's Blacks were so well bred up to work and skilful, that you paid him for one £80, for three each £60, and all the rest of the one and forty from £30 to £40 a head, except three at £25.'[2]

In the instructions of the Directors there is often evident a collision of ideas, inevitable when a people otherwise civilized bring themselves to tolerate the essentially barbarous institution of slavery. Slaves were human beings, and yet they were chattels. The Court was occasionally shocked at the callousness of its servants. 'We cannot approve', they wrote to St. Helena in 1749, 'of putting any of the slaves to death.'[3] When they indulge in the luxury of humanitarian feelings, we have passages like the following:—

'Remember they are men and women, though slaves, and therefore are to be used humanely, according to their circumstances, and not treated as bad or worse than brutes.'[4] Again (1717), 'Touching the slaves ... we need not repeat the directions given you. The short of all which you must take continued care of, is to treat them humanely, ... to apply them to such works of ours as they are or can be severally made fittest for, to breed them up, especially the younger,

[1] India Office Records, Letter Book No. 15, Dispatch to St. Helena, March 20, 1713.
[2] Ibid., No. 17, Dispatch to St. Helena, May 31, 1721.
[3] Ibid., No. 27, Dispatch to St. Helena, Feb. 15, 1749.
[4] Ibid., No. 15, Dispatch to Bencoolen, March 20, 1713.

to all sorts of handicraft trades, . . . to keep them to constant hours of labour, allowing them leisure on all Sundays, except in cases of present real necessity, and on some particular festivals. To suffer none to insult them, or even to strike them, but their own immediate officers, the guardians, and not to suffer *them* to tyrannize over them. This will make them love and fear you, for they are endued with reason as well as you, and their own minds can discern the difference between right and wrong, and if only punished when they deserve it, they will stand self-condemned in their own consciences, and that is the first step to reformation.'[1]

As is well known, books were occasionally sent out to the factories, and the nucleus of a public library was thus formed. In early days a Puritan Court of Committees dispatched the works of that 'worthy servant of Christ, Mr. William Perkins'; in 1686 Purchas's *Pilgrims* was sent, 'a book', ran the Company's letter, 'very necessary for you thoroughly to peruse at all leisure times, and for all men that would arrive at any maturity of understanding in the affairs of India, and of the Dutch wiles, and former abuses of our nation'.[2] In 1715 the Directors ordered the chaplains of Fort St. George to sort the volumes there into their proper classes, and draw up a catalogue.[3] A copy of the latter had to be sent to Leadenhall Street, but was not approved of, for we find this stimulating piece of criticism on the performance of the reverend gentlemen :—

'A great part of the titles of the books are false spelt or wrong copied or named; if the books are arranged in the order taken in the catalogue, they are so confused there is no likelihood of finding any of them out but by looking them

[1] India Office Records, Letter Book No. 16, Dispatch to Bencoolen, March 14, 1718.
[2] Ibid., No. 8, Dispatch to Bengal, Jan. 14, 1686.
[3] Ibid., No. 15, Dispatch to Fort St. George, Jan. 12, 1715.

all over till they come to what they want. We wonder they (i. e. the Company's ministers) should expose themselves to sign such a list, surely they never made use of any part of that library for their own studies, if they did, they would put them in better order.'[1]

The common theory that the Directors cared nothing except for their profits, gives only one side of their policy. They were certainly, first of all, traders: 'Our business is not to increase our settlements or territories, but to be content with the peaceable enjoyment of what we have, unless a lucky hit be afforded to obtain an addition at little charge.'[2] But a keen desire for gain was tempered with the sense that the Company represented a national force. The United Company began the first of its dispatches with a dignified exordium: 'Now we are established by a Parliamentary authority, we esteem it a duty incumbent upon us, to England and our posterity, to propagate the future interest of our nation in India.'[3] Reprisals were indeed 'like extreme unction, never to be used unless in the last extremity',[4] but a certain limit must not be passed. In 1719 the Directors, driven out of all patience by the depredations of Angria and other marauders on the Bombay coast, write, 'We say you must do all you can to frustrate their attempts, and make them feel your power. . . . Choose the fittest opportunity to chastise these Pickeroons. We should think it best . . . that when you do strike, you strike home.'[5] On the whole, a study of the records reveals the fact that the Directors always kept to some extent before them their famous resolution to establish a 'well-grounded sure English dominion in India for all time to come' (see *infra*, p. 44). They aimed

[1] India Office Records, Letter Book No. 16, Dispatch to Fort St. George, Jan. 25, 1717.
[2] Ibid., No. 15, Dispatch to Fort St. George, Jan. 13, 1714.
[3] Ibid., No. 12, Dispatch to Bengal, March 2, 1703.
[4] Ibid., No. 16, Dispatch to Bengal, Jan. 8, 1718.
[5] Ibid., No. 16, Dispatch to Bombay, Feb. 27, 1719.

at increasing the population of their towns, not indeed by conquest, but by allowing freedom of trade and administering a just government, and their advance was not quite the unconscious lapse into dominion that it is sometimes represented to be.

Especially excellent are their instructions as to our first attempts in the task of governing eastern peoples. In 1714 they write, 'We have always recommended to you to see justice administered impartially to all and speedily, to govern mildly and yet preserve authority. We have reason to add it here again for your remembrance, and earnestly to desire you will take care none under you be suffered to insult the natives, and that no voice of oppression be heard in your streets, this is the best method to enlarge our towns and increase our revenues.'[1] It would be difficult to draw up better general maxims for guidance in the administration of justice than the following: 'Never do an act of arbitrary power to hurt anybody. Let your determinations be always just, not rigorous but inclining to the merciful side. Always try the cause, never the Party. Don't let passion overcloud your reason. This will make the people respect you whereas one violent sentence or action will sully the reputation of ten good ones.'[2] 'Remember and always religiously perform that maxim in Magna Charta, *Nulli Vendemus, Nulli Deferemus, Nulli Negabimus justiciam.*'[3] In 1719, alluding to complaints they have received from natives as to some alleged extortion, the Directors order a strict inquiry to be made, and conclude with a passage through which breathes an altogether admirable spirit of dignity and power. 'Remember whoever is specially authorised thereunto and doth not act uprightly and heartily in relieving the oppressed,

[1] India Office Records, Letter Book No. 15. Dispatch to Bengal, Jan. 13, 1714.
[2] Ibid., No. 16, Dispatch to St. Helena, Feb. 22, 1717.
[3] Ibid., Dispatch to Bombay, Feb. 27, 1719.

brings upon himself the guilt of that oppression which will prove a load too heavy to bear perhaps in this life when his conscience is awake, but to be sure in that day when the secrets of all hearts shall be laid open and all the actions of men's lives accounted for at an unerring and just tribunal.'[1] In 1721, in a letter to Bengal, they thus sum up their doctrine of free commerce and equity in India: 'We have always built upon' this 'as a fundamental maxim that security of Protection and freedom in liberty and property with a due administration of justice must of necessity people your territories, considering the country all about you is under a despotic government.'[2]

If the problem before the English in India was one requiring greater qualities than those of merchants only, that which confronted the Court of Directors was perhaps even more formidable. For their knowledge of the East they had mainly to rely upon information from men whose interests did not always lie in telling them the truth. For some reason difficult to understand, the practice of electing to the directorate those who had served the Company in India was not popular. It had worked well in the case of William Methwold, but his case never became a precedent. For forty years after 1700, the lists of directors reveal, as far as I can find, the names of only two men, Captain Matthew Martin and Alexander Hume, who had lived in India, and the latter of these two men had been in the service of the Ostend Company.

The powers of the Governor and Council, and their relations to each other, are thus clearly set forth in a dispatch to St. Helena: 'We will . . . tell you the authority we invest you and the Council with, as that each may know how far he ought to go. The Governor is entrusted by us, in the first place, to see all our orders are obeyed; we appoint a

[1] India Office Records, Letter Book No. 17, Dispatch to Fort St. George, Dec. 19, 1719. [2] Ibid., Dispatch to Bengal, April 26, 1721.

Council to join with him therein, and to give their opinion each of them in all matters that come before them; the Majority of votes are to determine every question. If any one or more of the Council think the determination wrong, they must enter their dissent in consultation with their reasons, or else we take it for granted they agreed thereto, and shall censure them as we think they deserve. The whole Council when assembled are to judge of the management of each member, the Governor as well as the rest, for he is but one though chief, and if they find anything done or intended against our interests or orders, they are to remedy or prevent it, or else must bear the blame. In the absence of Councils, the Governor is to have the general care of all things, but as Councils must frequently meet and all the members are to be present when health will permit, we direct positively that the Council do meet once a week, and oftener, if occasion. We will never allow the Governor to prevent anyone of the Council's entering in the consultations the proposal they make, which they think for our service though rejected, if they shall desire such entry. If he doth, let them give us notice, and then they clear themselves of imputation on that account.' [1]

The Council was thus to be a real check upon the Governor; in another dispatch, to Fort St. George, this feature is emphasized. 'We appoint them (the Council) to their stations not to sit as Cyphers, but to have each his Negative whenever they believe they have a just reason.' [2] Again, in a similar letter to Bombay, 'No person of the Council shall be brow-beaten or intimidated on account of making exceptions.'

This system of check and counter-check has been much criticized, and in after years, when wider opportunities and

[1] India Office Records, Letter Book No. 16, Dispatch to St. Helena, March 21, 1718.
[2] Ibid., Dispatch to Fort St. George, Oct. 17, 1718.

deeper responsibilities crowded upon the Company's servants, it proved a source of great danger. But it must in fairness be remembered, that if a President in the East chose to defy his masters, it was extremely difficult to bring him to account. We have seen how Keigwin and Winter rebelled with impunity, and a curious instance occurred at Fort St. David in 1713, where Robert Raworth, the Deputy Governor, who had gallantly defended the town against the raja of Jinji the year before, revolted from Edward Harrison, the Governor of Madras. After holding out for some time, and firing on the envoys from Fort St. George sent to bring him to terms, he finally surrendered to the President in December, and retired to Pondicherry. Thence he set sail for France, and died in Paris, just as the Directors of the Company were preparing to prosecute him in England. A very vivid dread of such outbreaks impelled the Directors to crush with a heavy hand all symptoms of disloyalty, and explains the promptness with which (to take an instance) they dismissed the Governor and some members of Council at Fort St. George in 1721, for neglecting to obey their orders. The vigour of their language is typical of their fears: 'had this been only the hair-brained (*sic*) notions of a giddy-headed youngster we could have slighted and pitied it, but when we find the Council in the General letter patronizing it and referring us thereto to justify their proceedings, it is time for us to look about us, and crush this cockatrice of rebellion in the egg. We have often found fault with some instances of mismanagement, and generally in an expostulatory mild manner, hoping thereby to bring our affairs into a faithful, frugal and regular method of administration, as being unwilling to proceed to rougher methods of cure. But since Lenitives will not do, and the infectious gangrene spreads so fast, we must though with regret apply the last remedy.'[1]

[1] India Office Records, Letter Book No. 17, Dispatch to Fort St. George, April 26, 1721.

CHAPTER X

THE ENGLISH AND FRENCH IN INDIA TO THE PEACE OF AIX-LA-CHAPELLE

In the middle of the eighteenth century a change came over the destinies of the European settlements in India. The English and French Companies began to be embroiled in the international conflicts of their respective countries. The war of the Spanish succession, as we have seen, had run its course without any open conflicts between the belligerent nations in the East; the war of the Austrian succession was destined to have a different issue. Henceforward, European conflicts were to have their echoes in distant climes, and, in the words of Voltaire, 'the first cannon shot fired in our lands was to set the match to all the batteries in America and in Asia'.[1]

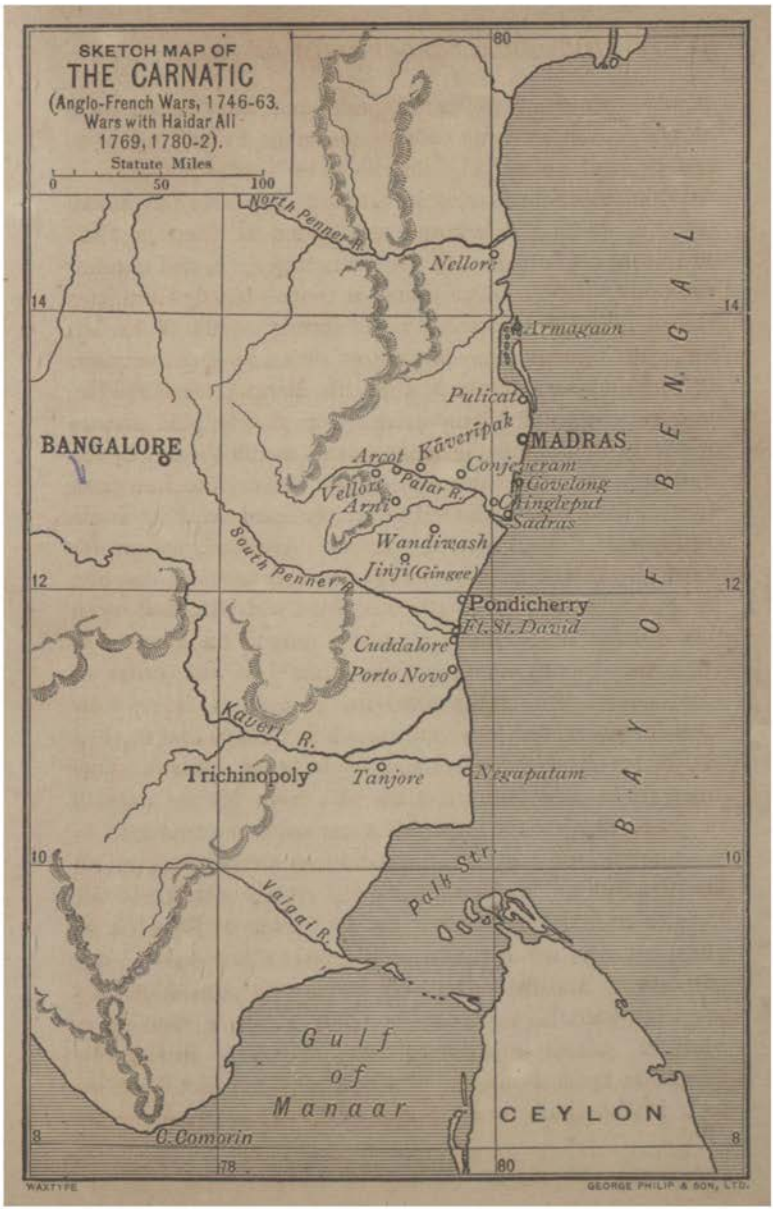
A few preliminary words must be said about the position of the French. The history of eastern exploration records some very early French attempts to reach India by the Cape route; for instance, that of Jean Parmentier, poet and scholar, who, with his brother Raoul, visited Madagascar and the Moluccas in 1529, and died in Sumatra. Henry IV chartered two companies for the Indian trade, but they failed for want of money and popular support. In 1642 Richelieu founded the 'Société de l'Orient', which dissipated its energies in the colonization of Madagascar, under the leadership of Pronis and Flacourt.

The first French East India Company that succeeded in establishing permanent trade relations with India was that

[1] *Fragments sur l'Inde*, 1773, p. 5.

of 1664, which owed its inception and most of its early success to the fostering care of the great French minister, Colbert, and Louis XIV himself. The first expeditions of the Company were wasted in attempts to revive the Madagascar colonies. A factory was founded at Surat in 1668 by Caron, a Dutchman in the French service, and another was established at Masulipatam in 1669. In 1674 François Martin founded Pondicherry, the future capital of French India, on a small piece of territory ceded by a native ruler, eighty-five miles south of Madras. In Bengal, 1690–2, a factory was built at Chandarnagar[1] on the Hughli, sixteen miles above Calcutta, on a site given to the French by the Nawab in 1674. In the seventeenth century the European wars of Louis XIV reacted adversely upon the East India Company. France was at war with Holland, except for short intervals, from 1672 to 1713, and though for the first two years of that period she was allied with England, even then the fighting in the East fell mainly to her share. In 1672 the French occupied St. Thomé on the coast of Coromandel, but in the following year de la Haye, their admiral, was driven from Trincomali in Ceylon, and in 1674 the Dutch captured St. Thomé. In 1693, after a short siege, the Dutch inflicted a decisive blow by the capture of Pondicherry itself. For six years the town remained in their hands, and they constructed there fortifications which long ranked as the finest in India. It was restored to the French with defences intact by the Peace of Ryswick in 1697, but was not actually handed over till 1699. Under the care of Martin, its founder, though he received hardly any help from home, Pondicherry grew into a flourishing town of 40,000 inhabitants. But elsewhere French influence in India decayed. The factories at Surat, Bantam, and Masulipatam were abandoned. The Company in

[1] *La Compagnie des Indes Orientales*, P. Kaeppelin, 1908, p. 301.



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France was practically moribund, and, from 1708 to its reorganization in 1720, sublet its privileges of trading to India to some merchants of St. Malo.

When the Scotsman, John Law of Lauriston, began his amazing career as controller of the French finances, the East India Company was soon involved in his famous 'system'. It was incorporated with the Canada Company, the Mississippi Company, or Company of the West, the Senegal Company, the China Company, and the Companies of Domingo and Guinea, and this mammoth association, known as the 'Company of the Indies', was also granted the right of issuing the coinage, the monopoly of tobacco, and the control of the public debt. When the crash came in 1720, the East India Company was reconstituted as the 'Perpetual Company of the Indies', and the monopoly of tobacco was the only one of the special privileges granted by Law that was left to it. From this date the fortunes of the French East India Company greatly improved. In 1721 its servants finally took possession of Mauritius (Isle of France), whither they had first gone in 1715. In the Isle of Bourbon they had probably settled as early as 1657, seven years before the founding of Colbert's company.[1] In 1725 they acquired Mahé in Malabar, and in 1739 Karikal on the coast of Coromandel.

The relative positions of the English and French in 1744 were as follows:—The English Company was by far the wealthier body, and drove the more vigorous trade. Its fleets of merchantmen were larger, and more regular in their voyages to and fro. It had a longer, more continuous and less chequered history in the East. The Presidency of Bombay was far superior in strength to any French settlement on the west coast, Calcutta quite dwarfed Chandarnagar in the Gangetic delta, and Madras was at least equal

[1] For the dates of the settlements in these islands, see vol. i of this series, 2nd edition, p. 134.

to Pondicherry in size and strength, and, on the testimony of the Frenchmen Dupleix and Labourdonnais, greatly excelled the French settlement in the extent and variety of its commerce.[1] Finally, and this is perhaps the most important point of all, the English Company was a great private corporation, founded and maintained by individual enterprise, supported by the profits drawn from the trade with India, not dependent in any way on the state, but rather having the state itself considerably in its debt; unconnected officially with the government by any legal tie, but able, by the presence of many of its Directors in Parliament and by its wealth and interest, to exercise no slight influence upon national policy.

As for the French Company, their settlements on the western shore and in Bengal could not claim, as we have seen, to rival those of the English, though in Pondicherry (their chief station) they possessed a fine and well-fortified town. In the Isles of France and Bourbon they had a *point d'appui* to India, on the value of which contemporary critics were not agreed, some holding these possessions to be of great value as a refuge for French fleets when driven by the autumn monsoons or a European enemy from the exposed sea-board of Coromandel, others considering that as a base of operations they were too far from the mainland of India, and therefore a source of weakness.

Viewed from the home aspect, the French Company differed strikingly from its rival. It had always been more the offspring of state patronage than the outcome of spontaneous mercantile activity,[2] and by 1744 it had sunk to the position of a subordinate department of state. From the very beginning the Company had never been in a position to dispense with royal subsidies and royal interference.

[1] *Mémoire pour le sieur de la Bourdonnais, Pièces Justificatives*, 1750, pp. 83, 98 seq.

[2] Compare vol. v, part I, of this series, pp. 79–80, 94, &c.

The King had often intervened drastically in its administration, as, for instance, in 1684, when he appointed Seignelay Perpetual Chief, President and Director. Its shareholders were a body of *rentiers*, with no lively personal interest in the Indian trade. Its revenue was largely drawn from the monopoly of tobacco, the one special privilege conferred upon it by Law which it had been able to retain. The Directors and Inspectors, who managed the most important affairs of the Company, were nominated by the Crown, and all real control passed into the hands of the King's Commissaries. The Crown was again and again obliged to come to the aid of the Company. From 1725 to 1765 no meeting of shareholders was ever called, and after 1733 the state even guaranteed dividends at a fixed rate. The most prosperous period of the French Company financially was probably from 1731 to 1738, and on the eve of the war of the Austrian succession their fortunes had already begun to wane.[1] As a consequence of the state's bureaucratic control a certain lethargy crept into all the Company's business, and was reflected in their Indian settlements. Trade flagged, or at least remained stationary. There was little enterprise or growth. Pondicherry had been developed by the energy of its founder, François Martin, who died in 1706, and later by Lenoir and Dumas. But Chandarnagar in Bengal, which province was commercially and politically the key of India, made little progress till it came under the control of Joseph François Dupleix, 1731–41. Captain Alexander Hamilton says contemptuously, 'for want of money they are not in a capacity to trade. They have a few private families dwelling near the factory, and a pretty little church to hear Mass in, which is the chief business of the French in Bengal'.[2] The perusal of the

[1] *Mémoire sur la situation actuelle de la Compagnie des Indes*, M. l'Abbé Morellet, Paris, 1769, pp. 43 seq.

[2] *A New Account of the East Indies*, Capt. Alexander Hamilton, 1744.

records in the India Office gives the same impression. It is extraordinary how few references there are to the French in the Company's *Letter Books* down, at any rate, to 1720. As late as 1718 the Dutch are still considered the strongest European nation in India: 'Their strength', wrote the Court, 'is greatly superior to ours and all other Europeans joined together, and nothing but the Powers in Europe makes them afraid to prove it against any or all of their competitors in the trade of India'.[1] Just as the English failed to realize how near the influence of Holland in India proper was to decay, so they failed at first to foresee how soon the French were to exhibit a brilliant revival. It was the news of the union of the Company of the West and the Company of the Indies that first made the Court of Directors in London uneasy. In 1719 they communicated to their servants in the East the details of Law's great scheme, and referred to a rumour that ten or twelve ships were building in England for the French Company. They added, 'what the issue of this mighty project will prove, which at present appears like a blazing comet, time only can ascertain. Our eye is upon that part of it which relates to the East Indies'.[2]

The more clearly it is understood that the revival of the French power only dates from about 1728, the greater is the testimony to the ability of men like Dumas and Dupleix, who in the short space of twenty years could lift the fortunes of their country to something like an apparent equality with that of their longer established rivals. But at the same time the reflection is suggested that the roots of the English Company must have struck far deeper into the Indian soil. No French ships at all sailed from France in 1721 and 1722. In October 1727 and January 1728 the imports

[1] India Office Records, Letter Book No. 16, Dispatch to Bombay, Feb. 21, 1718.
[2] Ibid., No. 17, Dispatch to Fort St. George, Dec. 19, 1719.

were only valued at 2,234,385 francs; in September 1729 and January 1730 at 5,404,290 francs. In 1734 the sales of the Company realized 18,000,000 francs, and in 1740 22,000,000. But even these totals are easily surpassed by the value of the English imports, which in the two later years were respectively £1,372,215 and £1,795,584.[1] The era of prosperity enjoyed by the French Company in great measure coincided with the accession to power of Cardinal Fleury (1726), and the peaceful policy which he inaugurated. M. Orry, Minister of Finance, appointed his brother to direct the Company's affairs, and under his able guidance the Indian trade for a time flourished.

At the outbreak of the war, therefore, though to a superficial view the English and French seemed about equally matched in strength and extent of possessions, it cannot be doubted that in financial power, in commercial wealth, and in material resources the advantage lay considerably on the side of the English. For all that, the French, partly through the genius of their governors and commanders, partly through the blunders of their opponents, were able to launch a formidable and brilliant attack upon the English Company. Whether they ever came within a measurable distance of ultimate success is exceedingly doubtful. Their triumph was in reality short-lived; it lasted but from 1746 to 1754, and seven years after that date their defeat was complete.

For some years before 1744 hostilities between England and France were seen to be in prospect. Both nations had taken part in the war of the Austrian succession which began in 1740, and had met face to face on European battlefields, but only as auxiliaries to the main combatants. In 1742 the French government, foreseeing the inevitable issue, made overtures to the English East India Company with a view to

[1] *Reports of the House of Commons*, vol. iv, p. 75. Third Report from the Committee of Secrecy, Feb. 9, 1773.

neutralizing the Indian settlements of both nations, but failed to come to a definite agreement.

Meanwhile, plans of a very different nature were maturing in the ingenious mind of Mahé de la Bourdonnais, an adventurous sea captain who, after many years under the French East India Company, broken by two years' service with the Portuguese, had been appointed Governor of the Isles of France and Bourbon in 1734, and in the course of five years, by his energetic administration, had done wonders for the prosperity of those colonies.[1] Returning to France in 1740 and anticipating a speedy declaration of war, he determined to fit out a privateering fleet to attack English shipping in India. The French government gave their assent to his schemes when laid before them, and coerced the East India Company into providing part of the fleet. La Bourdonnais sailed from home in 1741, boasting that he would carry out the greatest *coup* ever achieved upon the sea.[2] His plan was to await in Mauritius the declaration of war. But events moved much slower than he had expected. No declaration of war came, and so in 1742 the Company, who had never approved of his plan and still hoped for neutrality in the eastern seas, ordered him to send his ships back to France. La Bourdonnais, though bitterly disappointed, obeyed, and shortly afterwards was exasperated at receiving a second dispatch which cancelled the order and expressed the hope that he would have taken upon himself the responsibility of disregarding it. Shortly afterwards war was declared, and La Bourdonnais had the intense mortification of seeing the opportunity, for which he had waited so long, present itself when he had momentarily lost all chance of profiting by it. Not only that, but the English, having received intimations of his designs, had put forth great efforts, and a royal fleet under Commodore Barnet

[1] See vol. i of this series, 2nd edition, p. 135.
[2] *Mémoire pour le sieur de la Bourdonnais*, 1750, p. 22.

appeared on the Coromandel coast (1745) and threatened Pondicherry. The French Governor-General, Dupleix, who assumed office in January 1742, promptly appealed to the Nawab of the Carnatic, and the latter forbade the English to violate the neutrality of the Mughal Empire. Having thus secured himself from attack, Dupleix carried the war into the enemy's country. He planned with La Bourdonnais, who had equipped a new fleet in the Isles and also received reinforcements from France, to sail to the Indian coast and attempt the siege of Madras. La Bourdonnais reached Pondicherry at the beginning of July 1746, after fighting a drawn battle with Peyton, a very incompetent officer, Barnet's successor in the command of the English fleet.

But La Bourdonnais and Dupleix were not destined to act in unity. La Bourdonnais's original intention had apparently been to prey on British shipping, and as soon as he arrived at Pondicherry he seems to have shrunk from the attempt on Madras. He had at first some reason for hesitation, for he certainly could not have anticipated that Peyton would so pusillanimously have left the town to its fate. For six weeks he refused to set sail, unless he received from Dupleix and the Pondicherry Council a signed order to assault the town and a definite promise on their part to take all responsibility, for he feared the English fleet would attack him in the rear when engaged in the blockade. Dupleix in reply insisted that La Bourdonnais should either assault Madras or fight the English on the high seas, but he refused to relieve La Bourdonnais of the responsibility of deciding between these two courses.

In September La Bourdonnais was finally prevailed upon to commence operations. Madras, under its governor, Nicholas Morse, made a very feeble resistance, and surrendered on September 21, after a bombardment of a few days, during which not a man was touched on either side by the shot of the other, the only loss of life being caused

by the accidental explosion of a shell in the English ranks. Among the prisoners of war surrendered was Robert Clive, then a young writer in the Company's service, a youth of twenty-one with a melancholic temperament, high ambitions, and great, though as yet unsuspected, powers.

When Dupleix received La Bourdonnais's first dispatch announcing that Madras was in his hands and that he had the English at discretion, his satisfaction was complete, and he prepared to press his advantage to the full. To his intense disgust he received letters from La Bourdonnais proposing that the English Company should be allowed to ransom their settlement. Dupleix flatly refused to be a party to any such proceeding, claimed the right as Governor-General to adjudicate on the fate of the town, and implored La Bourdonnais not to lose the advantage of so unexpected a success. But La Bourdonnais, declaring that his word was already pledged to the English in Madras, hastily concluded the negotiations, and, influenced—in all probability—by a handsome bribe or *douceur* promised him by Morse,[1] signed a Convention engaging to restore Madras for £400,000. The conduct of La Bourdonnais was obviously disingenuous, for in his first dispatch he declared that the English had surrendered at discretion, and he had, since the capitulation discussed with Dupleix, as though the matter were still open, the various possibilities of ransoming the settlement, demolishing it, or retaining it as a French possession. Dupleix, putting a strong curb upon his natural feelings of resentment, had exhausted every means, reason, persuasion, and even entreaty, to prevent La Bourdonnais from taking the final step; but all in vain. 'The anger and vexation of the Governor,' says a native observer, 'when he heard the convention was signed, cannot be adequately described.'[2] His

[1] For the evidence of this see *History of the French in India*, by G. B. Malleson, Appendix A. Also *Dupleix*, by Prosper Cultru, pp. 217–19.

[2] *The Private Diary of Ananda Ranga Pillai*, ed. by Sir J. F. Price, K.C.S.I., vol. ii, p. 345.

bitter chagrin was natural enough, for he had from the first, since 1741, taken the chief part in preparing for the attack upon Madras, and it was mainly at his expense that the expedition was fitted out. An unedifying personal quarrel was soon raging between the two men; the writer quoted above noted in his diary that 'the ways of Europeans, who used always to act in union, have apparently now become like those of natives and Muhammadans'.[1]

La Bourdonnais refused to communicate with the officials whom Dupleix sent to take over possession of the town, and Dupleix called upon the officers of the army and the fleet to disregard the orders of La Bourdonnais as a rebel. There can be little doubt that in the main dispute Dupleix was in the right and La Bourdonnais in the wrong. The French in Pondicherry for the most part supported the Governor-General, and regarded his adversary as the victim of an incomprehensible infatuation. The legal point at issue was somewhat technical. In the ordinary course of events the final arbitrament as to the disposal of Madras would rest with Dupleix as Governor-General of the French possessions in the East. La Bourdonnais, however, constantly maintained that he had been given independent powers by the Minister of Marine, and had received orders not to retain any place he should capture. But this commission dated back to 1741, when only a privateering cruise against British shipping was in contemplation. The minister, in laying an injunction upon him not to retain any conquests, had not foreseen that he would co-operate with Dupleix in an attack upon an English Presidency town, and, as the Pondicherry Council pointed out, the alleged 'independent powers' were no more than those granted to any admiral of a squadron over his subordinate captains.[2] In truth, when La Bourdonnais

[1] *The Private Diary of Ananda Ranga Pillai*, ed. by Sir J. F. Price, K.C.S.I., vol. ii, p. 395.

[2] *Mémoires historiques de B. F. Mahé de la Bourdonnais*, Paris, 1828, pp. 288–9.

demanded an Order in Council before he would move to the siege of Madras, he virtually acknowledged the authority of the Governor-General, and condemned by anticipation the attitude he adopted after the surrender of Madras.

The course of events played into the hands of Dupleix. The break-up of the monsoons in October 1746, which began with a gale of unusual severity, drove La Bourdonnais back to the Isles with shattered ships. As soon as he had departed, Dupleix seized Madras, repudiated the Convention on the ground that the action of La Bourdonnais in concluding it had been *ultra vires*, and marched the English into Pondicherry as his prisoners of war. There, however, his success ended. The attack on Fort St. David, where the refugees from Madras had congregated, was repelled by Stringer Lawrence, a brave officer and sound tactician, who was destined to play a long and honourable part in the Anglo-French conflict in India. A formidable English fleet with thirteen ships of the line now appeared off the Coromandel coast and subjected Pondicherry to a severe siege. The French defence was ably directed, though the enemy's conduct of the operations is said to have been very incapable, and Dupleix had the satisfaction of seeing the English abandon their trenches, after losing one thousand men, a week before the Peace was proclaimed in India. During the war the English and French had been fighting in the far West as well as in the East, and diplomatists in Europe made success in one hemisphere balance defeat in the other. The Peace of Aix-la-Chapelle in 1748 restored Madras to the English and Louisbourg in North America to the French.

Thus ended the first round of the Anglo-French conflict. It has often been said that the quarrel between the two French commanders saved the English in India from ruin. But there is no real ground for such a statement, which magnifies the incident out of all proportion to its real

import. As the French historian Cultru points out, the most the French could have achieved at this time was to take Madras, and they took it; had there been no quarrel, they would merely have kept the town till the Peace, and they kept it, in spite of the quarrel. They retained, and could have retained it, no longer, simply because the matter was settled over their heads by statesmen in Europe. It may be added that the fall of Madras was a serious enough disaster for the English and a sufficiently great achievement of the French, without its being exaggerated to imply that the total ruin of the English settlements was threatened. The war on the Coromandel coast affected a single English Presidency town, and that one probably the weakest of the three. Calcutta and Bombay, the latter at this time the strongest European settlement in India, still remained. It may be argued that, had Dupleix and La Bourdonnais been united, they might have followed up their success against Madras by an attack on Bengal. But though Dupleix with characteristic daring suggested this course, it was scouted by La Bourdonnais on the ground that to violate the neutrality of the Mughal Emperor in Hindustan would have meant the expulsion of the French from his dominions. Dupleix failed even to reduce Fort St. David, a few miles south of Pondicherry. Calcutta was hardly likely to have surrendered as weakly as Madras, and Peyton's squadron was still cruising in the Bay of Bengal. In 1747 Boscawen was already on his way from England with the most powerful armament that had yet appeared in the East. Had the French been engaged before Calcutta when he arrived, they would have been easily blocked up in the Hughli, and Pondicherry itself would have been in imminent danger.

CHAPTER XI

THE ENGLISH AND FRENCH ON THE COROMANDEL COAST, TO THE RECALL OF DUPLEIX

AFTER the treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle, to all outward appearances the *status quo* on the coast of Coromandel was restored, though the French were left with a sense of being unfairly robbed of victory and the English of having fortunately avoided defeat. Besides this, the servants of the two Companies had openly confronted each other sword in hand, and the old peaceful relations could never be completely re-established. The war had changed their whole point of view: it had taught them, says a contemporary writer, for the first time 'the geography of the country a hundred miles round their settlements'.[1] It had also taught them incidentally their own strength in relation to the native powers. In 1746 an open collision had taken place between the French and An-waru-din, the Nawab of the Carnatic, under whose protection the English and French had long dwelt secure. Dupleix had only won his countenance to the French attack on Madras by promising to surrender the place to him after its capture from the English, a promise he had no intention of fulfilling. When the Nawab attempted to enforce his claims, a mere handful of French troops had defeated An-waru-din's army in a battle rather absurdly said by Voltaire to exceed in fame the feat of the Spartans at Thermopylae.[2] The victory, however, was extremely significant, and the lesson it conveyed was not

[1] *An Account of the War in India*, R. O. Cambridge, 1761, p. vi.
[2] *Précis du siècle de Louis XV*, p. 599.

lost upon Dupleix, who henceforward assumed, and rightly assumed, that the unwieldy, ill-disciplined, and badly led armies of the Muhammadan powers in southern India could not stand for a moment against trained European troops. After 1748 Dupleix was strongly disinclined to resume the rôle of the peaceful trader. He was, indeed, little fitted to be the chief of a trading-company's settlement in time of peace. He disliked the drudgery, and despised the monotony of a commercial life, and it was his firm conviction that in trade, at any rate, his nation could never hope to rival the English settlements. His bent lay rather in the direction of diplomacy and intrigue. Like all able men, he loved power, and both from policy and inclination was not adverse to a certain theatrical pomp and display. He had studied sedulously the complicated native politics of southern India, and soon found in them a promising field for the exercise of his peculiar talents. But it is an error to suppose that he began with such a comprehensive scheme as has often been attributed to him for the acquisition of dominion in India. He was, like most successful politicians (and this is said in no disparaging sense), an adventurer and an opportunist. His ideas widened and developed as he advanced from success to success. He hardly realized himself till the end of his Indian career whither his course was leading him, and, as we shall see, he afforded little opportunity to the authorities of the French East India Company or the French ministry to appreciate his position. Further, his fall was largely due to two other causes—the recklessness of his financial methods and his lack of restraint.

The English themselves had afforded Dupleix a precedent for his excursions into native politics. In return for the cession of a port at the mouth of the Coleroon river, they had supported the pretensions of a claimant to the throne of Tanjore. The Frenchman gave the policy a wider extension and a more daring application. In 1748 the aged ruler of

southern India, Asaf Jah, the famous Nizam-ul-Mulk, died, and his sons and grandsons immediately commenced to fight with one another for the succession. Dupleix had already begun to favour the claims of a native prince known as Chanda Sahib, whom all contemporary writers describe as a man of exceptional ability, against An-waru-din, the ruling Nawab of the Carnatic, and as this man united his forces with those of Mozaffar Jang, one of the claimants to the inheritance of Nizam-ul-Mulk, he had good hopes that in the future both the ruler of the Carnatic and his overlord the Subadar of the Deccan would owe their thrones to French arms. It is fairly obvious that if the design had succeeded, the resulting advantages to the French would have been very great. Dupleix played for a high stake and came within a measurable distance of success.

Mozaffar Jang and Chanda Sahib, supported by French troops, defeated and killed An-waru-din at Ambur in 1749. Muhammad Ali, the illegitimate son of the late ruler, fled to Trichinopoly, but the rest of the Carnatic passed under the dominion of Chanda Sahib, who liberally rewarded his benefactors, the French, by grants of land consisting of eighty villages round Pondicherry. Dupleix was eager to follow up the great initial success thus secured by a concentrated attack on Trichinopoly, and an advance in force against Nasir Jang, the *de facto* Subadar of the Deccan, but he could not prevail on his native allies to act as vigorously as he wished. Chanda Sahib wasted time in a fruitless attack on Tanjore, and in the meantime Nasir Jang marched into the province with a huge and unwieldy army, it being recorded that the circuit of his camp was twenty miles in circumference. He was joined by a British contingent of 600 under Major Lawrence, for the English, much against their will, had been driven to the conclusion that they must take up arms to prevent the native powers falling completely under the influence of the French. They had therefore

reluctantly sent a small reinforcement to the fugitive Muhammad Ali at Trichinopoly, though they foolishly declined Boscawen's offer to remain with his fleet on the Coromandel coast. Owing to the desertion of thirteen French officers, Mozaffar Jang surrendered himself to Nasir Jang, and Chanda Sahib was obliged to fall back upon Pondicherry. But the check to the French was only momentary, for Dupleix met the crisis with great coolness and resource. He intrigued first with Nasir Jang, then with disaffected individuals in his camp. His officers captured Masulipatam and Trivadi, and Bussy took Jinji, a position which had hitherto been considered invincible. Nasir Jang was soon afterwards assassinated, in December 1750, and Mozaffar Jang was released and installed as Subadar of the Deccan at Pondicherry. There he made over to the French the towns of Divi and Masulipatam, and added large pecuniary grants. A sum of £50,000 was given to the Company and a like amount to the troops, while Dupleix it is said received £200,000 and a *jagir* consisting of the village Valdavur with £10,000 a year. The new Subadar hailed Dupleix as suzerain of southern India from the Kistna to Cape Comorin. This 'vague and magnificent'[1] title, as it has been described, by no means meant, as Macaulay and many other writers have supposed, that Dupleix henceforward 'ruled thirty millions of people with almost absolute power'. It gave him no direct right of administration over the region indicated, which embraced the territories of Tanjore, Madura, and Mysore. These kingdoms had never even acknowledged the suzerainty of the Subadar of the Deccan, and that ruler had no power to delegate sovereignty over them. Even in the Carnatic, as we know, Chanda Sahib was Nawab till his death. When that event took place, Dupleix seems to have contemplated assuming the title himself, but was dissuaded from doing so by Bussy, who saw that it would exasperate

[1] *Dupleix*, Prosper Cultru, pp. 257–8.

the English irreconcilably, and Chanda Sahib's son was allowed to succeed. The title conferred merely an 'honorary suzerainty', but it no doubt added greatly to the prestige of the recipient in the eyes of the native powers, and enabled him to assume the state and even the dress of an Indian prince.

After Mozaffar Jang's enthronement at Pondicherry, the new Subadar set out in January 1751, accompanied by Bussy, the ablest of the French commanders, for Aurungabad. The original intention was that Bussy should return as soon as he had escorted the new ruler to his capital, but Mozaffar Jang was killed in a chance skirmish a few days after the march had begun. For a moment it seemed as though the wonderful success of the French was in jeopardy, but Bussy proved equal to the occasion. He boldly set aside Mozaffar Jang's infant sons, on the plea that it was impossible for a minor to succeed to so troubled an inheritance, elevated to the throne Salabat Jang, the third son of the late Nizam-ul-Mulk, who happened to be a prisoner in the camp, and conducted him safely to Hyderabad. Bussy stayed on to buoy up the power of his *protégé*, and for seven years he maintained his position with wonderful skill and address, guiding the policy of Salabat Jang, protecting him against his numerous enemies at home and defeating the foreign powers that invaded his territory.

Meanwhile in the Carnatic Dupleix reached the apogee of his fortunes in 1751. From that year his influence began to wane. Hitherto the English, reluctant to enter into the dynastic wars, had given but feeble assistance to those candidates for the thrones of the Deccan and the Carnatic who were supposed to favour their cause, and at one time had withdrawn all support from Muhammad Ali. But realizing at last that they could not afford to see him captured in Trichinopoly, they determined to help him effectually with money and men. Above all it was essential that

the important strategic position of Trichinopoly should not fall into the hands of the French. English trade would be ruined if all the hinterland of the seaports were to pass into the power of their European rivals. Hence followed the confused struggle known as the war in the Carnatic. The whole position was anomalous in the extreme. England and France were at peace in Europe, and therefore the representatives of the two Companies could not attack each other directly, nor, of course, assail each other's settlements. They waged war nominally as the allies of belligerent native powers, and at first some attempt was made, though it was soon abandoned, to maintain the legal fiction of Anglo-French peace, by a mutual understanding that the European forces should not fire upon each other. The whole of the Carnatic became the theatre of the war, and suffered terribly. The Rajas of Tanjore and Mysore were drawn into the conflict, and the Marathas were always at hand, ready and eager to fish in the troubled waters.

In the spring of 1751 it looked as though Trichinopoly must inevitably fall, but the genius of Clive evolved a scheme for its relief. By a daring expedition, in August 1751, he seized upon the fort at Arcot, the political capital of the Carnatic, and thus, as he intended, obliged Chanda Sahib to send half his army from Trichinopoly to attempt its recapture. Clive sustained the famous siege of fifty days immortalized and somewhat exaggerated in the glowing periods of Macaulay, and in the end beat off his assailants; he followed up this success by victories at Arni and Coveripak. Trichinopoly was relieved and reprovisioned by Lawrence and Clive; Jacques François Law, the French commander, nephew of the famous financier, John Law of Lauriston, was forced to capitulate with his army, and Chanda Sahib driven to surrender to the general of the Raja of Tanjore, who was then allied with Muhammad Ali. He was treacherously put to death, somewhat to the discredit of

the English, who might have exerted themselves to save him, and henceforward Muhammad Ali was *de facto* Nawab of the Carnatic. Dupleix always showed his greatest side in adversity, and he met these disasters with his usual intrepid resourcefulness, summoning to his aid the forces of the Marathas and intriguing incessantly with the native allies of the English. But Lawrence completely defeated de Kerjean at Bahour, and though there was still much hard fighting in the neighbourhood of Trichinopoly and many isolated French successes, the opponents of Dupleix slowly and steadily gained ground. Even Bussy began to urge the Governor-General to make the best peace he could. His own influence at the court of the Subadar of the Deccan had been eclipsed for a time, though he soon re-established his position, and in the autumn of 1753 obtained the cession of 'the Northern Circars', that is, the valuable districts in southern Orissa and the northern part of the Carnatic extending for about six hundred miles along the coast. This was, however, no unconditional grant of territory, as is sometimes supposed, but the allocation of the land revenue of the provinces for the support of his troops as long as they were in the service of the Subadar. As a matter of fact, southern India had been so desolated by the long war that for some years but little revenue from them was forthcoming.

'Mr. Dupleix', wrote the English at Madras in 1753, 'has by repeated strokes been reduced very low.'[1] At the end of that year he was driven to make overtures for peace. His generals had been defeated, his allies were discontented, and he was in sore need of money. His representatives met the English authorities in conference at Sadras, a Dutch settlement between Madras and Pondicherry. He there produced patents from Salabat Jang and the Mughal Emperor himself, appointing him Nawab of the Carnatic.

[1] India Office Records, French in India, vol. ii. p. 103, Letter from Fort St. George, Oct. 29, 1753.

The English pronounced the invalidity of the document purporting to come from the Emperor to be 'as clear as the sun at noon', and themselves produced other patents in favour of Muhammad Ali. The conference proved abortive, Dupleix refusing to moderate any of his demands, and the English indignantly declaring that they were not 'begging a peace'.[1]

In the meantime the Directors of the Companies in both London and Paris were growing dissatisfied with the too vigorous part played by their servants in these dynastic wars. Duvelaer, a Director of the French Company, finding it necessary to go to London on private business at the end of 1753, was authorized to discuss matters informally with the representatives of the English Company. Several conferences were held by him and the Duc de Mirepoix, the French ambassador, with the Duke of Newcastle and the Earl of Holdernesse, but though negotiations were spun out till 1755 no agreement was reached. A study of original documents[2] has revealed the fact that there is no truth in the traditional story that the English demanded the recall of Dupleix in return for that of Saunders, the President of Fort St. George, and then, in spite of their proposal being accepted, unfairly retained the latter in office. There was no such reciprocal agreement. As a matter of fact, in the negotiations of 1753 the name of Dupleix does not seem to have been mentioned. His recall had been determined upon before the conference began. Silhouette, the King's Commissary, had always been opposed to his policy. The news of Law's surrender at Trichinopoly had caused great uneasiness in France, and seemed fatally to corroborate the charges contained in the memoirs of La Bourdonnais which were published in 1750.

[1] *An Account of the War in India*, R. O. Cambridge, 1761, Appendix.

[2] By Prosper Cultru, in his *Dupleix*, pp. 359 seqq.

Godeheu, a Director of the Company, was sent out at the beginning of 1754 with plenary powers to supersede Dupleix and hold a searching inquiry into the state of affairs in India. He was also given sealed orders, which were quite unnecessary and might well have been dispensed with, to arrest the ex-Governor-General if he proved contumacious. The loyalty and patriotism of Dupleix were never in question; so far as he had erred, it was only in the means by which he had sought to promote the glory and honour of his country. Godeheu landed at Pondicherry in August 1754. In October he brought about a suspension of arms for three months, and followed this up in January 1755 by a provisional treaty which was not to be valid unless it were accepted by the two Companies at home. By its terms, both nations agreed to interfere no further in the quarrels of native princes, and to renounce all Muhammadan offices and dignities. The right of either party to various possessions was guaranteed, the only territorial concession contemplated being that the English should receive either Masulipatam or Divi in the Northern Circars, of part of which region they were already in effective occupation.

Dupleix afterwards protested that Godeheu had 'signed the ruin of the country and the dishonour of the nation'. His contention was that when his successor arrived in India, French affairs had already taken a turn for the better, and with the reinforcements which he brought with him Godeheu might have captured Trichinopoly and defeated the English. This judgement has passed into a verdict of history. Even Cultru—the brilliant French historian who, from an exhaustive study of the records, has taught us so much of the life and policy of Dupleix and exploded so many fallacies—seems to lapse back to the old view that Godeheu, out of pure 'baseness of soul', laboured to undo the work of his predecessor just as the tide was turning and success had come within the range of practical

politics.[1] Apart from the fact that this judgement seems to run counter to the conclusions of three-quarters of Cultru's book, I do not believe that there is a particle of evidence for it except in the biassed statements of Dupleix and his supporters. There appears no reason to postulate malevolence on Godeheu's part to explain why he acted as he did. He declares that he went out with an open mind, or even with predispositions in favour of the man he was to succeed; that he found the greatest confusion, the army clamouring for pay, and the treasury empty. To continue the war would have been the height of folly. He states that the troops he brought with him were almost worthless for fighting purposes. All this is absolutely corroborated by the Pondicherry Council, who wrote to the Directors that nothing more fortunate than the Peace could have happened to the Company, and that they had always doubted that the English would have been willing to accede to it in view of the advantageous position they occupied.[2] The Council added that the English had 2,500 men, including 1,150 soldiers of a King's regiment, many allies and plenty of money, while the French possessed but 1,150 troops—'God knows what sort of troops'—and were almost without allies and in sore straits for gold. The English in India unanimously took the same view. They held that the Peace was unduly favourable to the enemy. They had at the time 900 French prisoners of war in their hands as against 200 held by their opponents. Edward Ives, who arrived in India with Watson's fleet in 1754, says 'the Peace was by all deemed to have been a masterly stroke of French politics: on the contrary, the advantages resulting from this treaty to the English East India Company were beyond every one's comprehension, for it was by everybody known that at this time, exclusive of our naval force, our troops on the coast exceeded

[1] Prosper Cultru, *Dupleix*, p. 355.
[2] *Mémoire à consulter pour le sieur Godeheu*, 1760, pp. 85–6.

those of the French in number one thousand'.[1] Admirals Watson and Pocock loudly lamented that the Peace had tied their hands and robbed them of an assured success. With these views, the historian Orme, at that time resident in Madras—a man who never underrates the power of the French—thoroughly agrees. The truth is that the over-sanguine temperament of Dupleix, which carried him so far on the road to victory when fortune was kind, rendered him constitutionally unable to recognize the fact of failure. His own officers were well aware of this trait. 'He has always persisted', said Law, 'in refusing to believe anything as to the superiority of the army of the enemy over ours';[2] 'I see with sorrow', wrote Bussy, 'that events alone can convince you, and that you will only recognize the value of my advice when it is too late to profit by it.'[3]

It is to be noted, too, that Godeheu at first held out for higher terms, and it was only the arrival of Watson's fleet with a strong force on board, which threatened, in alliance with the Marathas, to launch a formidable attack from Bombay on Bussy in the Deccan under the leadership of Clive, that forced him to moderate his demands. It is indeed a mistake to represent the Peace as in any sense humiliating to the French. The territories guaranteed to them were assessed at an annual revenue of £800,000, those guaranteed to the English at £100,000. Godeheu fully appreciated the work of Bussy, who himself had no illusions as to the critical position of affairs, and in spite of the clause against interference in native politics the latter was left undisturbed at Hyderabad. Finally, the Peace was only provisional and required ratification by both Companies at home. Till then everything was to remain on the footing of *uti possidetis* That ratification never came, for the outbreak of the Seven

[1] *A Voyage from England to India . . .*, Edw. Ives, 1773, p. 46.
[2] *Plainte du Chevalier Law*, p. 28.
[3] *Mémoire pour le sieur de Bussy*, Paris, 1764, p. 38.

Years' War occurred before the decision of the home authorities was known. Therefore even the slight territorial changes suggested in the draft treaty were never made, and, as two recent French historians, Cultru and Weber, admit, it was the outbreak of hostilities in 1756 and not Godeheu's treaty which ruined the French settlements in India. The plain truth is that the schemes of Dupleix, bold, ingenious, and far-reaching as they were, had broken down. It was Godeheu's task to save what he could from the wreck. He succeeded to a greater extent than might have been expected, and afforded his countrymen an opportunity to recuperate—an opportunity of which they were unable to avail themselves to the full because a European war occurred before they had consolidated their strength.

When Godeheu arrived, the financial position was desperate. Dupleix had exhausted the treasury and anticipated his revenues in subsidies to his native allies and in the heavy expenses of the war. Had his plans succeeded, he would no doubt have been able to recover his loans and realize a surplus for the Company, but success had not come to him. Not only was the treasury empty, but Dupleix claimed that the Company owed him an immense sum advanced to them from his private purse. Godeheu has been freely blamed because he refused to admit this debt or give Dupleix assignments on future revenue. Such censure is unjust and beside the mark. Many of the ex-Governor-General's statements cannot be accepted without reservation. He declared in his *Memoirs* that he acquired an immense private fortune at Chandarnagar, and the implication is that it was this money he used in the Company's service. But his own letters, recently brought to light, prove conclusively that he had lost almost all the wealth he had amassed before he went to Pondicherry; his savings in 1741, on his own admission, were not large enough to enable him to

retire in comfort to France. The sums he had spent had been derived from the gifts and *jagirs* made over to him by native princes, which he was actually forbidden by a royal ordinance to accept. The Company's answer therefore, with some reason, was that he had squandered what was not his to spend, that he had used his position to acquire revenues without their permission, and had spent them in furthering a policy on which they had not been consulted. Godeheu's action seems to have been unimpeachable; he made him a generous grant for the expenses of his journey home, allowed him to retain the revenues from Valdavur, which produced about £10,000 a year, and referred the whole matter for final settlement to the Company. The Company and not Godeheu were responsible if any injury was done to Dupleix. The whole question is involved in considerable difficulty. However obtained, Dupleix had certainly spent his wealth from generous and patriotic motives in the public service, and the Company should at least have seen to it that their brilliant servant had a respectable pension, and this, if the traditional account is to be trusted, they do not seem to have done. But Dupleix did not die till 1763, and it seems only to have been in his latter days that he fell into poverty. With the loss of the French dominions his revenues from Valdavur came to an end, and the Company itself was then naturally in the greatest difficulties. Dupleix seems constitutionally to have had little sense of the value of money, and Godeheu says that he practised the most profuse expenditure on his return to France.

Many facts have recently come to light which explain, if indeed they do not altogether justify, the apparent failure of the Company and the home government to support Dupleix. He had treated them in a very cavalier fashion, informing them of his victories but concealing his defeats. His dispatches never even mentioned Clive's capture of Arcot.

The news of these disasters ultimately reached the Directors through Dutch or English news-sheets or private letters, and naturally aroused in them the greatest distrust. When Godeheu sailed from France, the Company, partly in this case through the delay of a ship, had received no news for a year, that is since the tidings of the surrender of Law at Trichinopoly. Dupleix had gradually, as we have seen, formulated a definite policy of building up French influence and dominion by a calculated interference in native politics, but he had failed to keep the authorities informed of his proceedings and the reasons for them. The Company only received a full and detailed account six months after he was recalled, and when they received it they cancelled his supercession, but, as it happened, too late, for he had already sailed for home.

We can accept no longer the character of Dupleix as depicted by Colonel Malleson, which was based too exclusively on the former's own memoirs, and did less than justice to his subordinates and colleagues. There is something rhetorical and artificial about the 'memoirs' of all the great Frenchmen in India at this time. Voltaire, with a characteristic sneer, declared they were large enough to chronicle the conquests of an Alexander. They were indeed not memoirs in the ordinary sense of the word, but manifestoes and protests, panegyrics of the writer's own career, and invectives against his rivals. They were usually drawn up or edited by advocates, and the same lawyer was responsible for the final form of the memoirs of La Bourdonnais and Dupleix. Thus the violent animosities engendered in the East were transferred to French soil, and there burned themselves out with fierce splutterings and fitful explosions, till they were finally quenched by the death of the disputants. But in spite of his final failure, Dupleix is a striking and brilliant figure in Indian history. For even if we give up the old uncritical estimate, we need not deny his real

claims to greatness. His political conceptions were daring and imaginative. He raised the prestige of France in the East for some years to an amazing height, he won a reputation among Indian princes and leaders that has never been surpassed, and he aroused a dread in his English contemporaries which is at once a tribute to his personal power and a testimony to their sagacity.

CHAPTER XII

ENGLISH AND FRENCH IN INDIA, TO THE PEACE OF PARIS. REASONS FOR THE FRENCH DEFEAT

AFTER the departure of Dupleix, the English and the French in the Carnatic enjoyed a four years' breathing space—the neutrality of mutual exhaustion. In that interval Siraj-ud-daula captured Calcutta, and Clive with the best troops on the Coromandel coast sailed away to restore British authority in Bengal. When the Seven Years' War broke out, the time seemed peculiarly opportune to the French government for an attack on the English settlements in southern India. Count de Lally, son of an Irish refugee, who had fought at Fontenoy, and at Falkirk in the Jacobite rising of 1745–6, was sent out to achieve this object. He landed in April 1758, after an unusually protracted voyage, by which time the English had recaptured Calcutta. Fort St. David was bombarded and taken by the French, much to the anger of Clive, who characterized the surrender as 'infamous'. There, however, Lally's success stopped. He had many virtues, for he was brave, conscientious, incorruptible—a somewhat rare virtue in India and at that time—and no mean tactician; but he was hot-headed and intolerant of advice, even from those better acquainted than himself with the conditions of Indian warfare.

The Governor of Pondicherry would not, and probably could not, furnish the money necessary for the pay of the troops; and Lally was driven to march against the Raja of Tanjore to exact payment of a bond of fifty-six lakhs of rupees that had come into the hands of the French. This expedition, which was declared by Bussy to be 'equally

unjustified in its motive and its execution',[1] was a lamentable failure and seriously damaged the already waning prestige of the French. D'Aché, the French admiral, who had fought two drawn battles with the British fleet in April and August, now sailed for the Isles of France and Bourbon in spite of Lally's protests.

Though it was an almost hopeless project to besiege an open port when his naval coadjutor had thus left the command of the sea to the British fleet, Lally now marshalled his forces for the attack on Madras. He summoned Bussy, who had all this time, in spite of great difficulties and some vicissitudes of fortune, kept his position at the court of Hyderabad, to come to his aid. Bussy obeyed, but with extreme reluctance, knowing all too well that he could never recover his influence there. His forebodings were soon justified. Clive, in spite of his critical position in Bengal, was watching events in southern India with a general's eye, and 'thought it was his duty to contribute his mite towards the destruction of the French'.[2] Accordingly, in October 1758, contrary to the inclinations of his whole council, he sent Forde, an officer of great ability, to intervene in the Northern Circars. Forde defeated Bussy's successor at Condore in December 1758, and stormed Masulipatam in the following April. French influence at the Court of Hyderabad was gone for ever. Salabat Jang ceded Masulipatam with territory of eighty miles long and twenty wide to the British, and engaged to have no more dealings with the French.

In the meantime Bussy's presence had been of little support to Lally. The two men differed fundamentally in policy. Bussy believed in a French dominion dependent upon a system of treaties and alliances, with himself, the keystone of the arch, residing at the court of Hyderabad

[1] *Lettres de messieurs de Bussy, de Lally et autres. Mémoire pour le sieur de Bussy*, p. 16.

[2] *Reports of the House of Commons*, vol. iii, p. 156.

and commanding an army of picked men; Lally's object was to expend all his energies and concentrate all his forces in attacks on the English settlements one by one. 'The King and the Company', he said, 'have sent me to India to chase the (English) Company out of it. . . . It doesn't concern me that such and such rajas dispute for such and such a nawabship.'[1]

The siege of Madras began in December 1758, but was abandoned in February, when the town was relieved from the sea. Henceforward the English were the aggressors, and Lally stood on the defensive. His troops were in a constant state of mutiny. He had absolutely no money, and his relations with the Governor of Pondicherry and his own officers were deplorable. D'Aché returned to the Coromandel coast in September 1759, and fought a third indecisive battle with Pocock. But, though his fleet was considerably the more powerful, he yielded the fruits of victory to the English, and retreated to the Isles in October, abandoning Pondicherry to its fate. For all that, Lally held out desperately for two years. In January 1760, however, he was severely defeated by Sir Eyre Coote at Wandiwash, where Bussy was taken prisoner. He was driven into Pondicherry, and there forced to surrender in January 1761. To such an extent had he made himself hated that, had it not been for a British escort, he would probably have been torn to pieces by the infuriated mob when he was leaving the city. He was conveyed to England as a prisoner of war, but obtained release on parole and returned to France in order to face the charges there preferred against him. After a two years' trial he was most iniquitously condemned to death and executed, though only errors of judgement could be proved against him.

The fall of Pondicherry sounded the knell of French dominion in India, for though the town was restored to

[1] *Lettres de messieurs de Bussy, de Lally et autres. Mémoire de Bussy*, p. 3, Letter of Lally to Bussy, June 13, 1758.

France by the Peace of Paris in February 1763, the fortifications had been demolished, and the treaty, in accordance with Clive's suggestion to the Marquis of Bute, limited the number of armed men which the French might maintain on the Coromandel coast, and excluded them altogether from Bengal except in a purely commercial capacity. Muhammad Ali, the English candidate, was recognized as Nawab of the Carnatic; and, though Salabat Jang's title to the Subadarship of the Deccan was acknowledged, French influence at his court was now a thing of the past. Moreover, the recognition was valueless, for Salabat Jang had been deposed by his brother Nizam Ali in 1761, and was murdered by him six months after the signature of the treaty. The Northern Circars had passed under the sway of the English, and in 1765 Clive procured an imperial decree ratifying and regularizing the English title.

Henceforward Pondicherry was always occupied by English troops on the outbreak of war with France. France did indeed make one formidable attempt to re-establish her power in 1781–3, an attempt which will be described in its proper place; but her attack on that occasion was directed from the sea, and the want of a regular base on land caused it to fail. The privileges of the French Company were suspended by a royal decree in 1769, Morellet, one of the ablest of the Physiocrats (the famous school of French economists who advocated a single tax on agricultural rents), having passed a severe condemnation on its past financial history.[1] In April 1785, the French Company was re-established, but only as 'a simple commercial house fortified by a monopoly, and no longer the sovereign mistress of a mighty empire'.[2]

Many causes contributed to the final victory of the English

[1] *Mémoire sur la situation actuelle de la Compagnie des Indes*, M. l'abbé Morellet, Paris, 1769.

[2] *La Compagnie française des Indes*, Henry Weber, p. 635.

Company, and not the least of them were its commercial superiority and better financial position. Morellet gives the value of the sale of Indian goods in France from 1736 to 1756 as, in round numbers, £11,450,000,[1] but the total of the sales of the English Company during the same period was more than three and a half times greater, amounting to £41,200,000.[2] After all, a flourishing business is essential to the prosperity of a trading company, whatever its administrative or military success. As Bussy—himself the most brilliant representative of the Political Resident—declared, 'laurels and conquests are for a commercial company a matter of simple calculation, always bad when the expense exceeds the receipts, or even when the produce is not at least on an equality with the outgoings'.[3] This principle certainly governed the destiny of the nation that proved the successful rival of the French. The English did, on the whole, make their conquests pay. They observed the law which Dupleix endeavoured to override. All through the war, the English busily transacted their ordinary commercial affairs and increased the value of their exports, as the records of their trade and shipping prove. The French figures, on the other hand, show a serious falling-off for some years after 1746. Later on, the territorial acquisitions in Bengal filled the English coffers. The English never forgot that they were primarily a trading body. Dupleix, on the other hand, deliberately came to the conclusion that for France, at any rate, the Indian trade was a failure, and that a career of military conquest opened up a more attractive prospect. But, under the circumstances that determined the fates of Europeans in the East, this was a cardinal error. India was too far distant from Europe, and France was too much involved in western continental politics to conquer an eastern empire

[1] These figures are derived from Morellet, pp. 86, 87.
[2] *Reports of the House of Commons*, vol. iv.
[3] *Mémoire pour le sieur de Bussy*, p. 23.

by the sword alone. The policy of Dupleix, wrote the English at Madras in 1753, 'seems to require National, and not a Company's support.'[1] No power could attempt to hold India from a distant base over sea unless its occupancy was based on sound commercial and financial lines. When Dupleix consciously inaugurated a different policy, he had already taken the first step in the decline of French power in India.

The English Company was still a vigorous, self-reliant, commercial body, managed by a private corporation, so far from being dependent upon state support that it had long been a creditor of the government for large sums. Its constitution enabled it to wield no inconsiderable influence in matters of public policy, while at the same time it escaped the deadening effects of detailed state interference.

The French Company had in reality long ceased to be anything but a subordinate department of government. All power was in the hands of the royal commissary. The Proprietors of the Company took no interest in its fortunes provided they could draw the interest on their capital, and this interest had since 1733 been guaranteed them by the state. The ministers of Louis XV were no doubt lethargic and unenterprising, but it must in fairness be remembered that European complications necessarily limited the amount of attention they could devote to eastern affairs; also, it is quite clear from the early history of the French Company that individual initiative in France was sadly lacking in matters of foreign trade. The state, under Louis XIV and Colbert, had galvanized the French Company into life, and when the vigorous hands of its patrons were withdrawn its energy evaporated. The state could not continue to subsidise the Company indefinitely. Morellet, in the course of his inquiry into the history of the Company's finances, lays

[1] India Office Records, French in India, vol. ii. p. 103, Letter from Madras, Oct. 29, 1753.

down two canons, the truth of which no economist will be inclined to deny. First, that there are infinitely more legitimate and more important uses to which the public revenue can be put than in maintaining a company which is bankrupt when left to itself; secondly, a commercial enterprise which is not self-supporting ought to be abandoned.[1] There is much truth in the judgement of an English observer in 1744, who commented even thus early upon 'the lamentable condition of the French East India Company's affairs'. Their attempts, he argues, have miscarried 'notwithstanding all the pains and assistance the government has bestowed upon them. In all other countries, but particularly [in] Great Britain and Holland, undertakings of this sort have been the work of private men in the beginning and have never claimed the aid or even the protection of the state till they were in some degree of forwardness, and then only from the apprehension of this difficulty, that the desire of gain might engage such numbers of adventurers in the same branch of commerce as might prove prejudicial to the public and to themselves. But in France it has been quite otherwise; private people never did anything till excited and encouraged by the government, and then were able to do little more than ruin themselves by launching out into enterprises beyond their abilities.'[2]

In the grim hand-to-hand fighting in southern India that went on almost uninterruptedly from 1746 to 1753, the English remained on the whole victorious, largely owing to the indomitable efforts and talent for leadership of Lawrence and Clive. Success on the mainland was seconded by success at sea. During all this period England was gradually building up her ascendancy on the waterways of the world,

[1] *Mémoire sur la situation actuelle de la Compagnie des Indes*, M. l'abbé Morellet, 1769, p. 253.

[2] *An Account of the French East India Company*, 1744, printed at end of vol. i of J. Harris's *Navigantium atque Itinerantium Bibliotheca*, London, 1744.

and after the beginning of the Seven Years' War, when France became more and more involved in central European entanglements, her predominant position became relatively greater. Indeed, British naval superiority would probably in any case have rendered the ultimate success of Dupleix impossible. Clive's capture of Chandarnagar robbed France of her chief settlement in the province that was in more respects than one the key of India. Even through the war of the Austrian succession, 1744–8, the English had succeeded in increasing their trade and so supporting the charges of war. After 1757, they could draw upon a new source of wealth—the revenues and resources of Bengal, which they administered for the Nawab.

None of these causes should rightly be emphasized to the exclusion of the others. Too close an attention directed to the long, tedious, and uninteresting military operations in India itself produces the frame of mind which seems to hold that the mutual squabbles of two commanders and the success or failure of a few subordinate officers determined the future of a great empire. But India was not won by the English and lost by the French because in one battle a commander marched up a hill when he should have marched down, or marched down when he should have marched up. The causes of great historical events are wrought deeper into the woof of things. A later and truer view relegates the land campaigns (though here there is some exaggeration in the contrary direction) to the domain of 'obscure operations' and believes that the control of the sea was all-important. Captain Mahan, the chief exponent of this theory, has made a very weighty contribution to naval history, but as the history of Europeans in India was not his main subject he has been inclined to underrate other factors contributing to this particular question.[1]

[1] Captain Mahan, in *The Influence of Sea Power upon History*, p. 254, says: 'The movement toward colonial extension by France is

A wide and impartial survey will give to each and all of them their proper place, and will attribute a full share of credit to the masterful genius displayed alike in peace and war by Robert Clive.

wholly popular, though illustrated by a few great names; the attitude of the rulers is cold and mistrustful.' This is certainly not true of French history in India. The Company was almost wholly the creature of the Crown and the ministers; state patronage and assistance in this case may have been a mistake but they were necessary, if there was to be any French trade with India, for want of popular enterprise and enthusiasm.

CHAPTER XIII

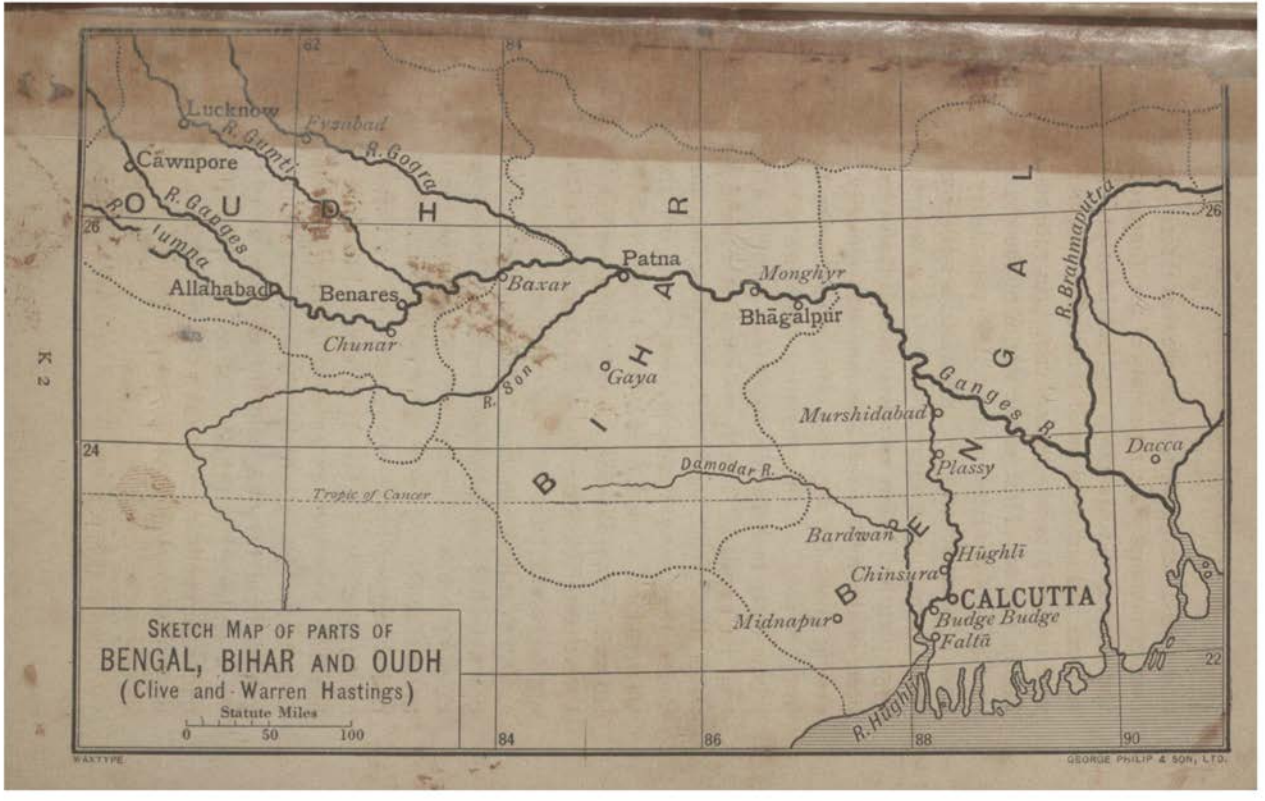
THE REVOLUTION IN BENGAL. PLASSEY, AND CLIVE'S FIRST GOVERNORSHIP OF BENGAL

In southern India, as we have seen, the Anglo-French conflict was fought out in about twenty years. The main theatre there was the rivalry of the two European powers and the native states were dragged almost against their will into the arena of the strife. In Bengal, on the other hand, three European nations, the English, the French, and the Dutch, had long been accustomed to live together peaceably; the outbreak of hostilities came as a mere incident in the open war that broke out between the English East India Company and the native powers. The chief stations of all these nations were built upon the Hughli, the English at Calcutta, the French at Chandarnagar, and the Dutch at Chinsura; and a glance at the map will show that the English, as nearest the mouth of that river, held the key of Bengal, for in order to reach the wharves of their respective ports it was necessary for French and Dutch ships to sail past the batteries of Fort William. But unlike the settlements in southern India, Calcutta and Chandarnagar had preserved a strict neutrality during the war of the Austrian succession, under the protection of Ali Vardi Khan, the Subadar or Nawab of Bengal, who ruled from 1741 to 1756. He was a man of considerable ability and great natural shrewdness. He seems to have clearly foreseen that with an incapable ruler of Bengal the country would soon pass under the sway of the western nations, and he compared Calcutta to a hive of bees that was a source of profit to its

owner when undisturbed, but a cause of danger and embarrassment if rashly interfered with. Ali Vardi Khan was succeeded by his grandson and grandnephew, Mirza Muhammad, generally known by his title Siraj-ud-daula, a youth of barely twenty years of age, with all the weaknesses and vices so often met with in the harem-reared princes of the East. During the reign of Ali Vardi Khan the Europeans in Bengal had been forbidden to fortify their settlements except as a defensive precaution against Maratha raids. But just before his death, both English and French, foreseeing that war in Europe was inevitable, and possibly reckoning on the fact that the change in the succession would weaken the native power, began to erect fortifications. Siraj-ud-daula ordered them to desist. The French made their peace with him, but the English were less fortunate. They failed to convince him that they intended to observe his command, and offended him by refusing to yield up a fugitive from his tyranny who had taken refuge in Calcutta. They had also undoubtedly given Siraj-ud-daula some ground for complaint by abusing the trade privileges granted them by the *farman* of 1717.

These questions were, however, but the occasion and pretexts for the outbreak of the war. The general causes lay deeper and were closely connected with the political and economic condition of Bengal. The revolution of 1756–7 was not primarily or solely the conquest of an Indian province by a European trading settlement. It was rather the overthrow of a foreign (Muhammadan) government by the trading and financial classes, native (Hindu) and British; both the latter gained commercially, though the British took the predominant part in the actual events, and alone succeeded to the political sovereignty. The fall of the Muhammadan power was precipitated by its internal dissensions.

The great province which included Bengal proper, Bihar,



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and Orissa was governed, as we have seen, by Nawabs owning nominally the suzerainty of the Emperor of Delhi. But for many years now they had been practically independent and strove to make their office hereditary. They were men of Mughal, Persian, or Afghan race ruling over a Hindu people. Most of the wealth of the country was in the hands of the latter, and a certain community of interest existed between them and the western settlers with whom they drove so prosperous a trade. It was noticed about 1750 that the Hindus were less tolerant than they had once been of the rule of the Muhammadan minority, and were casting about for some opportunity for freeing themselves from the yoke. Even before the death of Ali Vardi Khan, it was clear to keen observers that a collision could not long be avoided. The Nawab was strict and repressive rather than unjust, but the English were becoming restive under the many vexatious restrictions on their trade. 'Twould be a good deed', wrote Orme to Clive in 1752, 'to swinge the old dog. I don't speak at random when I say that the Company must think seriously of it, or 'twill not be worth their while to trade in Bengal.'[1] As long as Ali Vardi Khan lived, discontent only smouldered, but when he was succeeded by a headstrong, weak, and vicious youth, who pressed equally hard upon the European traders and his Hindu subjects, and insulted the great native financial house of the Seths, events hastened to the catastrophe. Siraj-ud-daula determined to drive the English from his dominions, and in directing his attack upon them rather than upon the French or the Dutch he was guided, from his own point of view, by a right instinct. Their settlement was the largest and the richest, their trade under Surman's *farman* was the greatest, and they were most closely connected with the Hindu merchant class.

[1] *The Indian Records Series. Bengal in 1756–7*, S. C. Hill, 1895, vol. i, Introduction, p. xxxiii.

f the English were expelled, the Nawab could deal at his isure with the other European settlements. Accordingly, aving ized the factory of Cossimbazar and ill-treated s prisoners, he marched upon Calcutta with an army f 50,000. The regular European garrison was under 300 en, and at that particular time it was much reduced eneath its ordinary strength, owing to the wars in southern ndia, but including volunteers and native troops a force f 515 was finally mustered, about 230 of whom were Europeans. The fort was in disrepair, the guns old, the powder deficient. The Company's servants in Calcutta seem to have been taken absolutely by surprise, and made frantic appeals for aid to the French and the Dutch, who, however, were in a still weaker position than themselves. The Nawab advanced to the attack on June 16, and two days later the women and children were put on board the ships in the river; at the last moment the Governor (Drake) and the commander of the garrison (Minchin), two most incompetent men, joined them. The fleet dropped down the river a short distance below the town and shamefully left the rest of the garrison to its fate, though Orme believed that a single sloop with fifteen brave men on board might have rescued the whole party. The fugitives landed at Fulta, twenty miles lower down the river. After the flight of the Governor and Commandant, the besieged garrison elected to the command Holwell, an ex-surgeon, under whom they held out for two days longer. They surrendered on June 20, being then reduced to 170 men. There followed the horrors of the 'Black Hole of Calcutta' an oft-told tale. A hundred and forty-six English prisoners, one of them a woman, were forced to spend the night of an Indian summer in the military punishment cell of the fortress, a room of about eighteen feet square. One hundred and twenty-three perished in the inferno so vividly portrayed by Holwell, himself one of the survivors.

The Nawab does not appear to have been personally responsible for this ghastly deed, which was due partly to the stupidity, partly to the savagery, of subordinates, but he never attempted to punish the perpetrators, and treated the survivors with callous severity. Terrible, indeed, was the disaster that had fallen upon the flourishing English settlement. Within a few days the up-country factories and agencies had fallen into the hands of Siraj-ud-daula, Calcutta itself was in his grip, and a few fugitives huddled together in misery and privation at Fulta—where the refugees from the fleet were joined by the survivors of the Black Hole—now represented the British occupation of Bengal. There for the time they were contemptuously left unmolested by their cruel enemy.

When the news of this appalling disaster reached Madras, anxious consultations took place. War with France was known to be imminent, and at first it was seriously doubted whether the English could afford to denude the Coromandel coast of troops. But in the end it was decided to make the recovery of Calcutta the first care. Orme, the historian, who was then one of the council at Fort St. George, eagerly advocated this course, and it was he who suggested that Clive, lately returned from England to be Governor of Fort St. David, should command the main relief expedition, rather than Pigot, the Governor of Madras, or Colonel Aldercron, an officer in the King's service. A small advance-guard reinforcement was at once dispatched under Major Kilpatrick, which arrived at Fulta at the end of July.

The selection of Clive in preference to officers of senior standing was a master-stroke of policy. The enterprise appeared to his colleagues difficult and dangerous, but he had no doubts and no tremors. He turned with delight from the work 'of improving and increasing the investment at Fort St. David' to his warlike and more congenial mission. 'The capture of Calcutta', he wrote, 'appears

no very difficult task.' He was buoyed up with the conviction that a great opportunity had come to him, and wrote to his father in an exultant strain: 'It is by far the grandest of my undertakings, I go with great forces and great authority.'[1] His supreme self-confidence was fully justified. He commanded a force of about 900 Europeans and 1,500 natives, while the fleet, consisting of five men-of-war and five transports, was under the command of Admiral Watson. The expedition, starting October 16, reached the mouth of the Hughli after an unfavourable voyage, and relieved the fugitives at Fulta in December. On January 2, 1757, Calcutta fell, and within a few days Hughli also surrendered to the British. Siraj-ud-daula once more led his army against Calcutta, and a sharp engagement was fought, which appears to have disheartened the enemy though it was by no means decisive. On February 9 an offensive and defensive alliance was concluded between the English and the Nawab. The Company's fort and all their former privileges and rights were restored to them, compensation was to be paid for losses, and permission was given to coin money and fortify Calcutta.

Within a few weeks of their appearance in Bengal, Clive and Watson had thus restored the English to their old position and wrested from Siraj-ud-daula the concession, the withholding of which had been the main cause of the outbreak. But it may appear strange that any alliance at all should have been entered into with the author of the Black Hole atrocity, and that the treaty should have contained no provision for the punishment of the guilty. The truth is, that Clive found himself in a very dangerous and critical condition, and he was forced to take many things into consideration besides the English quarrel with Siraj-ud-daula; his main reason, stated by himself, was that

[1] *The Indian Records Series. Bengal in 1756–7*, S. C. Hill, 1895, vol. i, p. 227.

'the delay of a day or two might have ruined the Company's affairs by the junction of the French with the Nawab'. His relations with the commander of the fleet were often strained. Clive was not only a soldier but a servant of the Company. Watson, as a King's officer, openly showed his contempt for all civil and commercial affairs, and in one moment of anger, according to Clive, he went so far as to threaten to open fire upon him with the guns of the fleet. Besides this, the Calcutta council claimed authority over Clive himself, and strongly objected to the special powers given to him by the authorities at Madras. Clive had, therefore, to steer his way with the greatest caution; the commercial interests of the Company required peace; and so he compounded with the Nawab when he could, realizing, in all probability, that he was but postponing an inevitable conflict. He took upon himself the responsibility of refusing a summons from Madras to return thither. He held that to leave Bengal at that time was to imperil the whole of his work there, and he judged—and judged rightly—that Madras with its own resources was capable of warding off any attack from the French. There was, however, a very real fear of effective French intervention in Bengal now that war was openly declared. Bussy was in the Northern Circars within 200 miles of Calcutta. Siraj-ud-daula, smarting from his humiliation at British hands, was strongly suspected of leanings towards a French alliance, and accordingly Clive and Watson turned their attention to Chandarnagar. There had already been some futile negotiations to maintain the neutrality that had hitherto been characteristic of European settlements in Bengal, and neither side had played a very ingenuous part therein. The British now felt themselves strong enough to assail Chandarnagar, and dispatches were received from England enjoining hostilities with the French. Admiral Watson sailed up the river and bombarded the enemy's forts on

March 23, 'as daring and meritorious an attempt', in Clive's words, 'as ever was made in His Majesty's sea service',[1] while Clive himself on the land side drove in the pickets and attacked the garrison at all points. The French fought gallantly, and inflicted severe loss upon the fleet, but, after having nearly 200 of their small force put out of action, surrendered. Part of the garrison made their escape to Cossimbazar, where Jean Law, brother of Jacques-François Law, was in command of the French forces.[2] Clive had extracted from the Nawab some reluctant and ambiguous words which he construed into permission to attack the French, but it required great tact to keep Siraj-ud-daula from intervening. About this time, we are told, Clive received from him as many as ten letters in one day, and answered every one 'with all the calmness and complaisance imaginable'. The Nawab's hesitation, so fortunate for the British, was partly due to the fact that a terrible blow had just fallen upon the Mughal Emperor, whose vassal he nominally was. In January 1757 Ahmad Shah Durrani had sacked Delhi. For the moment, the Nawab, uncertain what enemies might assail him from northern India, was anxious to maintain his alliance with the British, and was therefore disinclined to save the French.

The danger from the French removed, Clive had won a breathing-space and could reconsider his attitude to the native powers. It must have been clear to all that a recrudescence of hostilities with the Nawab was only a question of time. Subsequent events were to show that the huge army of Siraj-ud-daula was no match for the British forces, and if Clive had declared open war upon him success

[1] *Reports of the House of Commons*, vol. iii, p. 146.

[2] After Plassey, Law was chased by Coote over the Oudh frontier. Within the next two years Law pursued the career of a military adventurer, marching to Lucknow and Delhi, and twice assisting the rebel son of the Mughal Emperor to invade Bengal. He finally surrendered to the English with the honours of war in 1761.

would probably have been his. Unfortunately, this was not, and perhaps could not have been, understood at the time, and the English chose to fight the Nawab with the weapon of political intrigue. A revolution was in progress at the court of Siraj-ud-daula, and a conspiracy to dethrone him had been formed by disaffected nobles in favour of Mir Jafar, brother-in-law of Ali Vardi Khan. These men made overtures to the British, and Clive, feeling that 'there can be neither peace nor security while such a monster reigns', took the questionable course of supporting the plot against the ruler who was legally the ally of the Company. This first false step led almost inevitably to others. The negotiations were conducted by Aminchand (Omichand), a wealthy Sikh financier, who demanded a large commission on the money that might be found in the Nawab's treasury, and threatened unless this was guaranteed to him to divulge the whole plot to the Nawab. The threat of the blackmailer placed the Bengal council in a most unenviable position. They were at the mercy of Aminchand, and probably the least objectionable course would have been, as Orme declared, to pay him his commission, excessive as it was, and leave him to enjoy it 'in oblivion and contempt'. Clive thought otherwise. He afterwards declared that 'art and policy were warrantable in defeating the purpose of such a villain', and he won the consent of the Secret Committee of the council, who were entrusted with the negotiations, to a scheme to outwit Aminchand. Two drafts of the treaty with Mir Jafar were prepared; one authorized the commission demanded by Aminchand and was shown to him; the other, the real document, did not. The fictitious treaty was signed by Clive and the Secret Committee. Watson refused to meddle in the transaction, and Clive ordered his signature to be counterfeited and appended to the sham treaty.

Clive always consistently defended this episode, and

modern casuists have sometimes composed a laboured apology. But it was really indefensible. The critical position of affairs at the time affords a palliative but not an adequate justification. Clive's action no doubt suggested Horace Walpole's reflection that 'our governors there [in India], I think, have learned more of their treachery and injustice, than they have taught them of our discipline'.[1] In the treaty, Mir Jafar promised, when he became Nawab, to confirm all privileges allowed by Siraj-ud-daula, to make an offensive and defensive alliance with the British, exclude the French from Bengal, guarantee the Company a million sterling as compensation for the loss of Calcutta, and pay half that amount besides to the European inhabitants. By a private arrangement, not divulged to the Company at home, large gratuities were promised to the army and navy and members of the council.

These preliminaries settled, Clive now showed his hand to Siraj-ud-daula. He sent a letter taxing him with having evaded the provisions of the treaty of February 9 and corresponded with the French. He further proposed to refer the dispute to the Nawab's own council. Receiving no reply, he marched northwards from Chandarnagar, at the head of about 3,200 troops, for the famous grove of Plassey, twenty-three miles south of Murshidabad, where the Nawab was already stationed with an army of about 50,000 men. At Katwa, on the bank of the river within fifteen miles of Plassey, he halted for four days. It was still uncertain which side Mir Jafar would choose in the end to betray, and Clive's anxiety was great. The eve of his great victory was, curiously enough, almost the only occasion on which he seems to have shown any sign of indecision. He called a council of war and gave his own vote against advancing; twelve officers supported him in the majority, but seven led by Eyre Coote voted in opposition. Clive, after the

[1] *Letters of Horace Walpole*, P. Toynbee, vol. vi, p. 28.

council had broken up, meditated for an hour in solitude, and then announced that he would, in spite of its decision, continue to advance. He crossed the river on the 22nd, and reached Plassey shortly after midnight.

The battle was fought on June 23, 1757. There was a large disparity of numbers against the British, but a great part of the Nawab's forces were commanded by the traitor Mir Jafar, and never properly came into action. At the same time Mir Jafar himself, possibly moved by a last piteous appeal of the deluded Nawab to his honour, did not take that prominent part against his fellow-countrymen that the English had expected, and his conduct caused Clive the greatest uneasiness. Indeed, he only moved forward to join Clive when the issue was already determined. A long cannonade in the morning was followed by a British attack in the afternoon. The only resistance worthy the name came from a handful of Frenchmen in the Nawab's service. It was a mere rout rather than a battle. Clive had twenty-three men killed and forty-nine wounded, and the enemy not more than five hundred killed and the same number wounded out of his large army.

After the battle, Mir Jafar, conscious of the sorry part he had played, advanced with obvious diffidence and mistrust, but he was saluted by Clive as Nawab of the province and enthroned at the capital, Murshidabad. When the treasury there was entered it was found to contain not more than one and a half millions sterling, instead of the forty millions which popular rumour supposed, or the twenty-four millions estimated by the Company's agent at Cossimbazar. The total sum to be paid over to the English amounted to nearly two and three-quarter millions; it was therefore arranged that the debt should be discharged in instalments. The deluded Aminchand was informed that he was to get nothing; the wretched fugitive Siraj-ud-daula, abandoned by all his servants, fell

into the hands of Mir Jafar's troops a few days later, as he fled up the Ganges, and was put to death by order of the son of his supplanter.

Mir Jafar might be the nominal head of the government but the real power behind the throne was Clive, and such success as the new régime at first met with was almost entirely due to his inexhaustible energy. After he had been appointed Governor of Bengal he quelled several insurrections against Mir Jafar's authority and defended him against his external foes—the eldest son of the Emperor who was in rebellion against his father, and the ruler of Oudh. Besides protecting the *roi fainéant* that he had set up, Clive used his position to strike down Great Britain's remaining European rival in Bengal. The Dutch at Chinsura looked with undisguised dislike on the sudden aggrandizement of Calcutta, and were enraged by the grant to their rivals of liberty to search all vessels in the Hughli. Accordingly they entered into communications with the Nawab, who was already growing restive under Clive's domination. A fleet of seven ships appeared in the Ganges from Batavia, and assumed a threatening demeanour. The two nations were at peace in Europe, but Clive with calculated audacity took the law into his own hands. The Dutch gave him a handle by laying hands on some British shipping. He launched all his available force against them, captured their fleet, and defeated them on land through the agency of Forde, in November 1759. The Dutch made a complete submission, disavowed the acts of their naval commanders, acknowledged themselves to be the aggressors, and paid damages. From this date, though they preserved their commercial *status*, they abandoned all attempts to rival the British in the wider field of Indian politics.

In February 1760 Clive sailed for England, at the zenith of his fame while only thirty-five. In the position of the British in India he had wrought a truly marvellous trans-

formation. Writing to the historian Orme in 1757 he said: 'I am possessed of volumes of materials for the continuance of your history, in which will appear fighting, tricks, chicanery, intrigues, politics, and the Lord knows what.' The boast was true, and with characteristic frankness Clive did not disguise the large part played by stratagem and finesse in his policy.

A comparison of the position in 1756 with that in 1760 reveals beyond all possibility of cavil the magnitude of his achievement. In 1756 the British in Bengal, though the most prosperous European community in that province of the empire, were regarded merely as a body of merchants with one rich settlement, a few territorial rights in the villages round Calcutta, and some up-country agencies or factories at Cossimbazar, Dacca, Balasore, Jagdea, and Patna. Though shrewd observers, such as Bernier the French physician at the end of the seventeenth century, and Colonel Mill about ten years before Plassey, had seen and recorded their opinions that Indian armies would be helpless before trained European troops, the British had never yet dreamt of challenging the power of the Nawab of Bengal. They had submitted with occasional protests to Ali Vardi Khan's strict and irksome control. It was necessary to keep on good terms with him, for the up-country factories were quite unfortified, and it was the practice of the Nawabs in any serious dispute to blockade them and stop all trade till submission was made. By 1760 the position was entirely altered. The British were supreme in Bengal. The French and Dutch were impoverished and reduced; their military and political power was gone. The titular Nawab of the province was little more than the creature and protégé of the Company. British influence extended outwards from Calcutta through Bengal and Bihar to the southern boundary of Oudh. The possession of this rich country also completely altered the English position in Madras.

This tremendous change was almost entirely the work of Clive. He was throughout the moving spirit. The more closely the contemporary records are examined, the more clearly his immense energy, masterful will, and dominating influence over his colleagues stand out.

But when every tribute has been paid to the intellectual quality of Clive's achievement, certain moral limitations must be noted, for they reacted on the permanence and value of his results. Recent writers on Indian history do not err on the side of hostile criticism of eighteenth-century empire-builders, but if James Mill and his school were over-harsh in their judgements, the pendulum has now perhaps swung too far in the other direction. By certain of his actions Clive had marred both the glory and the usefulness of his work. Like the great Duke of Marlborough, he was over-fond of money, and he had unequalled opportunities of amassing it. Like Marlborough too, he did not make it dishonestly, nor was anything he did, perhaps, at variance with the deplorably low standard of his age; but it is difficult to combat the verdict of Macaulay that he cannot be acquitted 'of having done what, if not in itself evil, was yet of evil example'. The facts are not in dispute. By a private arrangement made with Mir Jafar before Plassey it was stipulated that £400,000 should be given to the army and navy and £120,000 (afterwards apparently increased to £150,000) to the Select Committee of six persons. Additional presents were afterwards received. Clive's share in all amounted to £234,000, and other members of the Council received from £50,000 to £80,000. A sinister fact was that Mir Jafar, as subsequently appeared, imagined that in paying these additional sums he was purchasing immunity from his obligations to the Company. Clive's defence was that at this time there was no regulation of the Company forbidding the receipt of presents; and when presents were not exacted by compulsion, when they were given by

a prince in a state of independence, they were not dishonourable.[1] The defence was legally sound, but in the first place Clive must have known that Mir Jafar was hardly a free agent. These sums, says Sir Edward Colebrooke, were not really presents in any sense of the word; 'they were moneys bargained for the sale of a province under a transaction stained with falsehood and treachery throughout'[2]—a judgement which, though perhaps over-severe, is hardly untrue. Secondly, Clive, as a practical politician, should have recognized that he was creating a very dangerous precedent, and, as we know, after his departure the Bengal Council, within the space of five years, engineered three more revolutions without any of the strong reasons which palliated, if they did not excuse, Clive's action, and on each occasion dipped their hands deep into the treasury of the Nawab.

Burgoyne's doctrine, afterwards laid down in the House of Commons, is unimpeachable: 'that it was impossible that any civil or military servant in treating with a foreign prince or state could, while doing so, lawfully bargain for or acquire property for himself'. That Clive had an uneasy sense of the truth of this is proved by the fact that in a long dispatch to the Secret Committee of the Court of Directors, written four weeks after he entered Murshidabad, he gave full details as to the compensation to the Company and inhabitants of Calcutta that Mir Jafar had stipulated to pay in the public treaty, and described the deficit in the treasury, but he made no allusion to the private agreement, the large sums paid to the services and the Committee, or to the huge amount afterwards received as presents. He did indeed, later on, allude to the fact that the generosity of the Nawab had made his fortune easy, but the Directors, when

[1] *Reports of the House of Commons*, vol. iii, p. 148.

[2] *Rise of the British Power in the East*, M. Elphinstone, ed. by Sir E. Colebrooke, p. 315.

they wrote, 'we do not intend to break in upon any sums of money which have been given by the Nabob [Nawab] to particular persons by way of free gift',[1] could hardly have realized what large amounts were in question. An excuse is often found for Clive in the parsimonious conduct of the Directors, who still insisted on paying low official salaries to their servants in India. But though the salaries were nominally meagre enough, there were recognized ways of increasing them by the right of private trade. Clive himself, on his first return to England in 1753, at the age of twenty-eight, after but nine years' service, brought back a fair fortune, which enabled him to pay off his father's debts, make considerable display as a man of fashion, and win a Parliamentary election after a lavish expenditure of money.

Finally, by the acceptance of these presents, Clive, though perhaps unconsciously, imperilled the permanence of his settlement of Bengal, and so infringed his own canon that presents must not be received to the disadvantage of the Company. Before Plassey, the British seem really to have believed that the treasury at Murshidabad contained as much as forty millions sterling, and, in the light of this belief, the sums accepted as presents may have appeared comparatively small. The real value, as has been said, was discovered to be £1,500,000, while the British claims under the public and private treaty amounted to over two and three-quarter millions. The obviously right course was to surrender the sums promised by the Nawab as gratuities, but it was not taken. The new government of Mir Jafar was saddled with the obligation of discharging the debt, and so started on its difficult and dangerous path already heavily handicapped. Clive's famous exclamation is well known, that, when he remembered the gold, silver, and jewels in the treasury of Murshidabad, he was astonished at his own moderation. But when he made this statement in 1773 he must have

[1] *Reports of the House of Commons*, vol. iii, p. 149.

forgotten, or ignored, the fact that at the time he was obliged to make arrangements with the Nawab to have the sums due to the British paid by instalments, for the reason that the deposits in the treasury were insufficient to discharge the debt.

But Clive was to receive still more. Mir Jafar had procured for him from the Emperor the title of *Omrah*, or noble. It was customary, when this rank was conferred on native subjects, for a *jagir*, or revenue derived from land, to be given them to support their rank. In Clive's case, of course, the title was merely honorary, but thinking apparently that a quarter of a million was not a sufficient reward for his services to Mir Jafar, he wrote, on his own admission,[1] to the financial minister of the Nawab, informing him that he had been made an *Omrah* without a *jagir*. The hint was taken, and a little later Mir Jafar, partly out of gratitude for the driving away from Bengal of the Emperor's rebellious son, partly, as was suggested at the time, for fear that his intrigues with the Dutch would be punished, granted to Clive the huge sum of £30,000 a year, being the quit rent paid to himself by the Company for lands south of Calcutta. There was nothing technically illegal here, but the want of delicacy shown by Clive was surely amazing. We have to remember that he had already received £234,000 from the man to whom he made this further application—an application that, in the relations in which they stood to one another, was almost a demand. The acceptance of the *jagir* made him, the servant of the Company, also its landlord—a position which, as the Court of Directors afterwards maintained, was, even if legal, highly improper. It has been well said that 'however great Clive's services may have been, they were really the services of those who employed him, and therefore, if the Nawab was in a position to renounce the quit rent, the renunciation ought to have

[1] *Reports of the House of Commons*, vol. iii, p. 154.

been made in the Company's favour'.[1] But there was at any rate here no concealment, and the Company deserve little sympathy, for instead of objecting at once, as they should have done, to the position 'of being tributary to their own servants', they allowed the payments to be made for some years, and then withheld them on purely personal grounds, 'all cordiality with Lord Clive being at an end'. The Company, therefore, must share the responsibility, though it must be admitted that Clive was in a position to know, and they were not, how straitened at this time were the means of the Nawab. He was asked at the Parliamentary inquiry of 1772 whether, at the time the *jagir* was granted, he knew that the troops of the Nawab were mutinous and clamouring for pay, and he answered that he did, adding, as a kind of justification, that it was the custom of the country never to pay the army a fourth part of what was promised them. He was then asked whether he was aware that before the grant was offered to him the Nawab's jewels, goods, and furniture were publicly sold to pay the Company the sums stipulated in the treaty, and again he was forced to answer 'Yes'.[2]

Clive, therefore, by crippling the resources of Mir Jafar at the beginning of his administration, cannot be exonerated from some share of the blame for the notorious misgovernment in Bengal that followed. Full allowances must be made on the score of the lower public morality current at the time in all matters of finance. It was the rule and not the exception for statesmen in the eighteenth century to make large personal profits out of their official positions. The whole doctrine of prize money governed not only military but civil life as well. At the capture of Gheria from the pirate chief Angria in 1756 the English troops divided £120,000 amongst themselves, reserving not one penny for

[1] *A Comprehensive History of India*, by H. Beveridge, vol. i, p. 659.
[2] *Reports of the House of Commons*, vol. iii, p. 155.

the East India Company. Lecky has recorded the fact that the Duke of Marlborough received from the state no less a sum than £64,000 per annum. The truth is that everywhere at this time, and especially in India, as Sir John Malcolm, Clive's biographer, admits, a 'spirit of plunder' and a 'passion for the rapid accumulation of wealth' actuated all ranks. The whole atmosphere was corrupt from a modern point of view. The older school of historians were apt to judge men like Clive and Warren Hastings too severely by the standards of a later age, but it is not less absurd to assume that all their financial transactions were worthy of praise. To do so is unjust to men who were capable of rising to greater heights. The Governors-General appointed from the ranks of English statesmen after 1785 excelled even the best of the Company's servants in their attitude to such questions. The historian Thornton with justice remarks that the views and actions of Indian officials at this time present a very discreditable contrast to the conduct of Lord Wellesley in refusing the sum of £100,000 tendered to him without solicitation by the ministers of the Crown from the spoils of Seringapatam.

CHAPTER XIV

MISGOVERNMENT IN BENGAL. REFORMS AND CLIVE'S SECOND GOVERNORSHIP

On Clive's departure for Europe there ensued, in the words of Sir Alfred Lyall, 'the only period of Anglo-Indian history which throws grave and unpardonable discredit on the English name'. The fact was more lamentable than surprising. A little body of Englishmen engaged in commercial pursuits had, within a few years, been raised from the control of a single town and some up-country stations to a real, though as yet unacknowledged, authority throughout a wide province. Theirs was the power of the sword that upheld the native ruler whose sway was acknowledged throughout Bengal, Bihar, and Orissa. This man, their tool and nominee, was himself in theory the deputy of a *roi fainéant*, the Mughal Emperor. The divorce of the *de facto* power from the *de jure* sovereignty was at this time the political fashion throughout India, and it appeared in the greatest Hindu state as well as in the Mughal Empire, for the actual authority in the Maratha confederacy had already passed from the successor of Sivaji, seated on his prison throne at Satara, to the Peshwa, or Mayor of the Palace, and was soon to be transferred from the Peshwa to the Peshwa's Brahman minister, and from the minister to the hereditary generals of the confederate armies. These political shams inevitably had a demoralizing effect upon the trend of British policy, for which great allowance must therefore be made. For the British in Bengal to have accepted the native political claims at their face value would have meant that

the burden of the administration and of warlike operations would have fallen on their shoulders, while the profits of power would have been paid into the exchequer of worthless and helpless native rulers. The practice generally adopted by the British was to concede the native political claims as far as possible, at the same time taking care that their own services should not go unrewarded. When this course led them to an *impasse*, as it ultimately did through the anarchical condition of native jurisdictions, they were apt themselves to solve the difficulty by some rather transparent political fiction, when it would have perhaps been better openly to acknowledge that their own interest and the cause of humane government required the drastic sweeping away of the cobwebs of outworn political systems.

On Clive's departure, Vansittart, the new Governor, and the Council were confronted with some special difficulties. The Company's treasury was exhausted. The Nawab was in arrears with the subsidy for their troops, and, worst of all, no remittances were sent from home, the Directors believing that vast wealth had been acquired in Bengal, and expecting that Presidency to supply money for Bombay and Madras. 'It is a most amazing thing to consider,' wrote the Directors in 1758, 'that a settlement so abounding with industrious inhabitants, and flourishing in its trade . . . should produce so little profit to the Company. This cannot be easily accounted for other ways than from the luxurious, expensive, and idle manner of life . . . among all ranks of our servants.'[1]

Foreign difficulties were added to internal complications. The new Mughal Emperor, Shah Alam, nominal suzerain of Mir Jafar—the theoretical overlord of the Company—invaded Bengal. He was defeated by a British force, but entered into friendly relations with his conquerors. At the same time the Bengal Council, at the instigation of Holwell, find-

[1] Letter to Calcutta, March 3, 1758.

ing that Mir Jafar was hopelessly weak, deposed him in favour of his son-in-law, Mir Kasim. It is only fair to state that many members of the Council protested strongly against the decision 'to dethrone a man we were bound to support by the most solemn ties, divine and human', and stigmatized it as 'an indelible stain upon our national character'.[1] Vansittart and Holwell hoped to regularize this second revolution by using the power they had so suddenly gained over the Emperor. Nothing could have shed a clearer light upon the whole situation. Mir Kasim, the nominee of the East India Company's servants, sitting on a throne erected within the English factory at Patna, was endowed with the viceroyalty of Bengal, Bihar, and Orissa, by a sovereign who had just been defeated and taken prisoner by British troops. The British had far more real power than Mir Kasim, and Mir Kasim than the Emperor, who was in fact a homeless fugitive; and yet in theory these positions were exactly reversed.

The British obtained from Mir Kasim, as the price of their support, the cession of the districts of Burdwan, Midnapur, and Chittagong, which gave them valuable territory to the west, north-west, and east of Calcutta, and the Council followed Clive's unfortunate precedent by receiving for themselves gratuities to the amount of £200,000. A sidelight is thrown upon the rapacity of the Company's servants at this time by the simple fact that Vansittart, the Governor, whose character stood higher than that of the average civil servant at this time, received more than £50,000, though he had an allowance from the Company of £18,000 a year, and carried on trade on his own account besides.

Mir Kasim was a ruler of considerable administrative ability, and in many ways improved the position of his province, but he soon came into collision with the British in

[1] *Reports of the House of Commons*, vol. iii, pp. 252, 254.

Calcutta. Ever since 1717 the Company had been allowed to conduct its export trade from Bengal free of duty. After 1756 its servants began illegally to claim exemption on their private trade, which they carried on in the province and in which they competed with the Nawab's subjects. It therefore happened that, while the Company was demanding heavy subsidies from that unfortunate ruler for the support of the troops that defended his dominions, its servants, by claiming an illegal monopoly, were lessening his revenues and impoverishing his people. The evidence of the wrong thus done to the natives of the province is indisputable. Verelst, afterwards Governor of Bengal, admitted that 'a trade was carried on without payment of duties, in the prosecution of which infinite oppressions were committed'; and the young Warren Hastings warned his fellow-countrymen that they were 'erecting themselves into lords and oppressors of the country'. It is quite impossible, in a short history, to enter into the details of the struggle. It must be enough to say that Mir Kasim was gradually driven to the conviction that he could get neither justice nor a fair hearing from the Bengal Council, who, in their attitude towards their oriental suzerain, displayed, as Macaulay says, 'the strength of civilization without its mercy'. Finally, all the hidden ferocity and brutality of the Nawab's nature flared out; he seized the servants of the Company, was defeated in two fiercely-contested engagements, and massacred two hundred of his prisoners. Throughout this discreditable episode, only two Englishmen played an honourable part, Vansittart and Hastings, who resisted their fellows at the Council board, and supported the Nawab until his acts of violence and treachery made it impossible for them to do so any longer. The conduct of Hastings was especially commendable, for he did not stand high in order of seniority; he seems to have successfully resisted the many strong temptations of wrongly acquiring wealth

that beset him, and he was perhaps the only Englishman in Bengal who emerged from the business with clean hands and unsullied honour.

Mir Kasim was deposed, July 1763, and Mir Jafar once more placed upon the throne. He was forced to grant the English the privilege of internal trade, and indemnify the Company for their losses at the hands of Mir Kasim, who by British aid had usurped his throne. Mir Kasim fled across the frontiers of Oudh. The rulers of that country enjoyed the title of Nawab Wazir, i.e. First Minister of the Mughal Empire, though they had long been practically independent, and were often at variance with their suzerain. The then holder of the title, Shuja-ud-daula, was however for the moment supporting the Emperor, Shah Alam, and it was over their combined forces that Major Munro, who had just quelled the first sepoy mutiny in the Company's army by stern measures, won a great victory at the Battle of Baxar in 1764.

Baxar, as Sir James Stephen says, deserves far more than Plassey to be considered as the origin of the British power in India. It was a fiercely-contested battle, and the troops of Mir Kasim offered a determined resistance. The English lost 847 killed and wounded, while the enemy left behind them 2,000 dead. It was not merely the Nawab of Bengal, as at Plassey, but the Emperor of all India and his titular Prime Minister who were defeated. The Emperor at once made his submission, but the Nawab Wazir refused to come to terms till British forces had marched into Lucknow and Allahabad, and all Oudh was at their mercy.

Meanwhile Mir Jafar, the puppet Nawab of Bengal, had died in February 1765, and the Bengal Council raised to his throne the second son in preference to a grandson. They seized the opportunity to strengthen their own control over the country, for the real administration was to be henceforward in the hands of a deputy Nawab (Muhammad

Raza Khan), to be appointed on their advice and not to be dismissed without their sanction. The Court of Directors had again and again condemned the private trading rights claimed by their servants, and had sent the strictest orders against the taking of presents. In face of this the Bengal Council forced the new ruler to leave their trading rights untouched, and compelled him to make handsome presents to the Governor and his colleagues of £139,357. 'Corruption had done its work, and the moral fibre of the whole settlement was rotten. 'There was', says Verelst, 'a general contempt of superiors . . . a total contempt of public orders whenever obedience was found incompatible with private interest.' Such was the state of affairs when Clive arrived to take up his second governorship, after a five years' residence in England. He had been given an Irish peerage, a reward deemed by himself inadequate. He entered Parliament, purchased a great English estate and several rotten boroughs, so that he was soon at the head of a little coterie of followers in the Commons. He also plunged into the politics of the India House, where he encountered considerable opposition, probably due to his famous letter to Pitt, written from India in January 1759 and advocating that the Crown should take over the East India Company's territorial acquisitions. The party hostile to Clive (led by the Director Sulivan—once his friend but now a bitter opponent), having gained the ascendancy in the Court of Directors, ordered the authorities in Calcutta to cease paying to him the revenues of the *jagir*, whereupon Clive instituted against them a suit in chancery.

In February 1764 news arrived of the deplorable position of affairs in Bengal, and these disastrous tidings enabled Clive to win a complete victory over his enemies in the Directorate. The Court of Proprietors insisted that he should be sent out to restore the fortunes of the Company and overrode all objections. He was appointed Governor

of Bengal and Commander-in-Chief. The enjoyment of the *jagir*, on his own proposal, was guaranteed to him for ten years, or till his death, if he died before that period had elapsed. His chief partisan, Rous, was elected Chairman of the Court of Directors. On arriving in India he was to work with the existing Bengal Council, if possible; if not, he was empowered to form a Select Committee of four, presided over by himself, to whom all the functions of government were to pass. Two of the Committee, Colonel Carnac and Verelst, were already in Bengal. The others, Sumner and Sykes, sailed with him. Clive arrived in May 1765, to find the external position completely retrieved, the Company's arms everywhere victorious, and the highest political authority of all India a suppliant for British charity. In internal affairs the Calcutta government had openly defied all the regulations for reform put forth by the Directors, had thrice set their own candidate upon the *masnad* (or throne) of Bengal, and had turned each occasion shamelessly to their own profit. Finally, owing to their policy towards Mir Kasim, they had plunged into a war on a question that did not concern their employers' interest in the least, for the East India Company was only concerned with the oversea trade.

Clive acted with his usual decisive promptitude. His work may be classified under three heads; first, his reform of the Company's civil and military services; secondly, the acquisition of the *Diwani* (or revenue administration) of Bengal; and thirdly, his external policy. It will be convenient to summarize as clearly as possible his acts under these separate designations, and then to add a few words of comment on his achievements as a whole.

Clive soon made up his mind that to stem the tide of corruption with the existing Council would be a hopeless task. He therefore nominated his Select Committee two days after his landing. The Company's servants were

forced to subscribe the covenants against the receipt of presents, and the system by which they had been enabled to escape the regular internal imposts on their private trade was abolished. Clive himself was in favour of the total abolition of licensed private trading, and advocated a large increase in official salaries; but he could not win the Court of Directors to his views. As an alternative, he attempted to regularize and limit the existing practice by granting a monopoly of the trade in salt to the superior servants of the Company in graduated shares, so that the Governor received £17,500 per annum; a Colonel in the army or a member of Council, £7,000; and lower ranks, lesser amounts in a descending scale. Clive was afterwards severely censured for this arrangement, which was said to run counter to the orders of the Directors against allowing their servants to trade in certain commodities, of which salt was one. This was no doubt technically true, but every one at the time considered it essential to augment the official salaries in some way, and since, as we shall see, a fixed allowance was henceforward to be made to the Nawab by the Company and his income was no longer to be derived from internal dues, many of the former objections against private trade in salt were removed. Two years later the Directors abolished his system and substituted for it commissions on the revenues of the province, which gave to the Governor about £18,500 a year in addition to his salary of £4,800, and to other ranks emoluments in proportion.[1]

Naturally these drastic reforms were not carried through without the most determined resistance from the original Council, of whom Spencer, the Governor, and several other leading officials were expelled or forced to resign. When Clive thundered against 'the rapacity and oppression'

[1] *Reports of the House of Commons*, vol. iv, p. 460. It was sometimes even more. The amount paid to the Governor Verelst for the year ending Aug. 31, 1768, was £27,093, ibid., p. 162.

universally prevalent and declared that 'every spark of sentiment and public spirit was lost and extinguished in the inordinate lust of unmerited wealth', the men who were trounced in this heated language naturally recalled the huge sums amassed by their censor in his first period of office. To them it appeared that Clive, having then secured a colossal fortune, was apprehensive that, if similar methods were not checked in Bengal, Parliament would direct its attention to the matter and his own conduct in the past would not escape investigation. To this feeling they attributed the fury of his onslaught. Plausible as all this must have sounded at the time, it was almost certainly untrue. That Clive's action in the past was injudicious and that it involved a most unfortunate precedent we have shown. But, too apt as he was to shelter himself behind technicalities and the letter of the law, he was honestly convinced of his integrity and the purity of his motives. He would have answered that in 1757 there was no order of the Court of Directors against the receipt of presents, and that the change of succession brought about in that year was a genuine revolution. The very strength and violence of his language in describing the corruption in Bengal, though it was perhaps partly due to natural irritation at the attacks of which he was made the object, shows that he really considered his own conduct in the past to have been on quite a different level from that of Spencer and his colleagues. It *is* true, therefore, to say that during his second governorship he cleansed the Augean stables of the Bengal establishment, that he acted throughout with a single-eyed aim for the good of the Company, that he took, as he frequently boasted, no profit to himself and received no emolument from the Court of Directors. On the other hand, it is equally true that, when Clive arrived in India and heard at Madras that the Company's affairs were far more prosperous than had been supposed, he wrote post haste in cipher to his agents

in London to invest all his available funds in the purchase of East India stock—a not very reputable use of knowledge gained in his official capacity. Though he did not take for himself the huge profits (£17,500) allocated to the Governor from the salt monopoly, he yet distributed his share among his relatives and dependents, and though he repeated with unnecessary iteration that he would receive no profit of any kind from his second governorship, yet he was afterwards granted by the Company on his return another ten years' enjoyment of the *jagir*, and had he lived this would have amounted to £300,000—not an insufficient emolument for a period of office of two years.

By his reforms Clive alienated the whole of the civil service in Bengal, and by abolishing, as he had been required to do, the custom of extra pay or 'double batta' in the army, which, properly only granted on active service, had been continued by Mir Jafar since Plassey in time of peace, he incurred the relentless enmity of the officers. A dangerous mutiny was organized, and Clive at one time stood almost alone in Bengal, against a combination of very sinister forces. His commanding genius was never more in evidence. He determined 'to put all to the risk rather than suffer the authority of the Council to be insulted'. By promptitude and daring he crushed the mutinous spirit and completely cowed the rebellious factions.

The famous acquisition of the *Diwani* of Bengal was the first great step by the Company towards territorial dominion. Before he reached Bengal, Clive had come to the conclusion that some such responsibility must be incurred. He wrote from Madras, 'we must become Nabobs in fact if not in name, perhaps totally so, without disguise'. The *Diwani* conferred upon its holder the right to collect and administer all the revenues of the province, and Clive prevailed upon the Emperor Shah Alam to confer this momentous power upon the East India Company. Henceforward its servants

were to collect the revenues and defray the charges of government, to pay to the Nawab a fixed sum of 53 lakhs of rupees (reduced to 41 lakhs in 1766 and to 32 in 1769), and to the Emperor 26 lakhs.

The constitutional relations between the Nawab of Bengal and the East India Company are very complicated and difficult to understand. Perhaps the clearest explanation that can be given of them is as follows. The Nawab or Subadar of Bengal, as Viceroy of the Mughal Emperor, exercised two functions: (1) the *Diwani*, i. e. revenue and civil justice, (2) the *Nizamat*, i. e. military power and criminal justice. Now, as Sir James Stephen points out, in February 1765 the Nawab practically had granted the *Nizamat* to the Company, and in August 1765 the Emperor ceded to them the *Diwani*; 'the Company thus held the *Diwani* from the Emperor and the *Nizamat* from the Subadar'. So far the position, though highly technical and intricate, is not difficult to grasp. It was further complicated by the fact that the servants of the East India Company as yet did not undertake their duties as Diwan or Nazim in their own persons. The nominal head of the administration was a Deputy Naib or Nawab (the words are practically identical), whom the Nawab bound himself to appoint with their sanction. A similar Deputy was appointed for Bihar. The whole administration was for many years conducted almost entirely through native agency, though in 1769 English supervisors (afterwards called collectors) were appointed to control the native revenue officers. But according to the testimony of Kaye, they only 'made confusion more confounded and corruption more corrupt'. Such was Clive's famous 'dual system'. It was easy even at that date to point out its defects. The unfortunate divorce of power from responsibility soon caused a recrudescence of the old abuses. The policy indeed can only merit approval in so far as it led up to the more open

assumption of responsibility by the Company under Warren Hastings and Lord Cornwallis. But Clive could not afford to indulge in counsels of perfection; he had to deal with actualities. He admitted that the Nawab had only 'the name and shadow of authority', yet 'this name . . . this shadow it is indispensably necessary that we should venerate'. As Verelst—an acute observer—noted, it was almost impossible at first to have taken over the full management, because of the limited number of the Company's servants and their ignorance of the task of administration. There was finally the consideration that openly to have assumed the government of Bengal would have caused a breach with other European powers, and Clive was supported in this by the almost universal opinion of the statesmen of his day.

So much for the internal administration. Clive had next to deal with the foreign relations. It was expected, when he left England, that he would be called upon to conclude the war raging between the Company and Mir Kasim. But he found the work of conquest completed by the victories of Adams and Munro, and it is probable enough, as was hinted at the time, that he felt a little natural disappointment when he discovered nothing to do in the field. There was, however, abundance to satisfy the most insatiable diplomatist. The whole political system of northern India was in the melting-pot. The Mughal Emperor and his chief minister were in the Company's power and suppliants for their bounty. Oudh lay defenceless before British armies. Clive determined to confine the territorial influence of the Company to Bengal, Bihar, and Orissa; to restore his forfeited dominions to the ruler of Oudh; to recognize the title and, as far as possible, support the power of Shah Alam. Shuja-ud-daula was called upon to pay fifty lakhs of rupees as a war indemnity, and was reinstated in his possessions with the exception of the districts of Kora and Allahabad. A defensive alliance was concluded whereby the Company engaged

to provide him with troops for the defence of his frontiers if he needed them and consented to furnish the cost of maintenance. The settlement with Oudh was destined to be the most lasting of Clive's political acts, and it remained in the condition of a 'buffer' state till its annexation by Lord Dalhousie on the eve of the Mutiny.

It was necessary next to deal with the fugitive Emperor, Shah Alam, who with his high claims and feeble resources presented a political problem of a peculiarly delicate and embarrassing nature. Clive made over to him the districts of Kora and Allahabad which had been withheld from the Nawab of Oudh, for the support of his imperial dignity, together with an annual subsidy of twenty-six lakhs. He also obtained from the Emperor the reversion of his *jagir* to the Company, when his own ten years' enjoyment of its revenues should be terminated.

The settlement with the Emperor was an adroit compromise and easily laid itself open to attack from political theorists. Clive was at once accused of being quixotically generous to a political fugitive and of having treated cavalierly a monarch in distress. Men were found (of whom Eyre Coote was one) to advocate a British march to Delhi and the conquest of all India in the name of Shah Alam. But Clive, though he recognized that 'It is scarcely hyperbole to say that to-morrow the whole Mughal Empire is in our power', was not to be dazzled by these brilliant prospects. It was a great step in advance to extend British sway over the three provinces of Bengal, Bihar, and Orissa, and even so he begged the Court 'not to be staggered at the Magnitude of their possessions'. He knew as well as any one that, from a purely military point of view, there was nothing to stop British troops from advancing on Delhi; but he was a statesman as well as a soldier, and deliberately recorded his opinion that 'to go further . . . is a scheme so extravagantly ambitious and absurd that no governor and

council in their senses can even adopt it unless the whole scheme of the Company's interest be first entirely new modelled'. How right was Clive's judgement was proved by the fact that during the next twenty years the frontier of British dominions was only defended with difficulty from external enemies. The Maratha onset was repelled, but had the British lines been thrown further forward, it is possible that in the troublous times ahead they could not have been held.

Clive left India January 1767, shattered in health and spirits. He had carried considerable reforms, though the partiality of biographers has sometimes exaggerated them. The Company's civil service was not thoroughly purified till the time of Cornwallis, but Clive had done more than any one man at the time could have hoped to accomplish. He had made many enemies, who returned to England vowing vengeance against him. They effected an alliance with a party whose motives were far more worthy of respect—men genuinely desirous that a stricter control should be established in financial matters over the Company's servants. A feeling of alarm was springing up at home at the temptations of the East and the fatal facility with which great fortunes were acquired. 'Those men', says a contemporary writer in 1772, 'must have more than a moderate share of virtue, who, considering the universal veneration in this country paid to men of wealth, will return with a moderate fortune after being several years entrusted with the government of India',[1] and two years before, Lord Chatham from his place in Parliament declared, 'For some years past there has been an influx of wealth into this country, which has been attended with many fatal consequences, because it has not been the regular natural produce of labour and industry. The riches of

[1] *Considerations on a pamphlet entitled Thoughts on our Acquisitions in the East Indies*, 1772.

Asia have been poured in upon us, and have brought with them not only Asiatic luxury but, I fear, Asiatic principles of government. Without connexions, without any natural interest in the soil, the importers of foreign gold have forced their way into Parliament by such a torrent of corruption as no private hereditary fortune could resist'.[1] In 1772 it became apparent that Clive's measures had not availed to ward off a serious economic crisis, and Parliament found that the Company was in danger of insolvency, unless the Treasury or the Bank came to its aid. This was the one unpardonable sin. 'If . . . sovereignty and law are not separated from trade', said Burgoyne, the leader of the Company's critics, 'India and Great Britain will be sunk and overwhelmed, never to rise again'.[2] In that year a Select Committee of thirty-one members and a Secret Committee of thirteen inquired into Indian affairs. The first *Reports* of the former dealt with the revolutions in Bengal, 1757–60, the presents granted to the Company's servants, and Clive's *jagir*. It is usually said by Clive's biographers that these Committees were inspired solely by animus against him, and Clive himself indignantly declared that they questioned him as though he were a sheep-stealer; but there is little evidence of any unnecessary bias in the *Reports* themselves, and they are a valuable storehouse of facts for the history of the East India Company. It was inevitable that Clive should be the chief person examined, for he had played the predominant part during those years on the Indian stage; and it was inevitable also, though most unfortunate, that his earlier acts in Bengal, the deception of Aminchand and the taking of presents, should be severely criticized. In the meantime, it is true, Clive had performed great services, and stemmed the tide of corruption in Bengal; but this was almost forgotten for the moment

[1] Chatham's speech, Jan. 22, 1770, Hansard.
[2] *The Parliamentary History of England*, vol. xvii, p. 458.

in the excitement caused by the revelations of the two Committees.

On May 10, 1773, Colonel Burgoyne moved three resolutions of importance: '(1) That all acquisitions made under the influence of a military force or by treaty with foreign princes do of right belong to the state. (2) That to appropriate acquisitions so made to the private emolument of persons intrusted with any civil or military power is illegal. (3) That very great sums of money and other valuable property have been acquired in Bengal from princes and others of that country, by persons intrusted with the civil and military powers of the state; which sums of money and valuable property have been appropriated to the private use of such persons.' These resolutions were carried, as they were almost bound to be, for they merely stated incontrovertible facts. On May 17, Colonel Burgoyne abandoned general and abstract resolutions for a specific attack on Clive. He moved that Clive 'through the influence of the powers with which he was intrusted as a member of the Select Committee and commander-in-chief of the British forces did obtain and possess himself of the sum of £234,000; and that in so doing the said Robert Clive abused the power with which he was intrusted to the evil example of the servants of the public and to the dishonour and detriment of the state'. This resolution as drafted would have blasted Clive's reputation. Brought face to face with his enemies, Clive defended himself passionately and with striking ability. His speech ended with the famous words, 'Before I sit down I have one request to the House, and it is that when they come to decide upon my honour they will not forget their own.'

In the House itself there was a great revulsion of feeling. It was strongly felt that Clive had nobly atoned by his subsequent career for the errors of taste and judgement in 1757. The original motion was discarded. The mere

statement that £234,000 had been received was carried, but the words of reflection on Clive's honour were negatived without a division. Finally, after a whole night's debate, at five o'clock in the morning, the famous resolution was carried unanimously, 'That Robert Lord Clive at the same time rendered great and meritorious services to his country.'

But Clive's wounded feelings were only partly salved by this honourable acquittal. He had always been rather melancholic in temperament, and brooding thoughts over the attacks upon his name, together with the agonies of a painful disease, drove him to take his own life on November 2, 1774, in his fiftieth year. Thus in physical misery and with somewhat tarnished fame perished the real founder of British dominion in India. Clive's qualities peculiarly fitted him for the rôle on the Indian stage that he was destined to fill. He had a certain rough-hewn, almost elemental force and a tireless energy which made him a true pioneer of empire. 'He settled great foundations', said Burke; and again in another passage, 'When Lord Clive forded a deep water with an unknown bottom, he left a bridge for his successors over which the lame might hobble and the blind might grope their way.'[1] The note of his character was decision and an iron will. He diagnosed a situation quickly, knew exactly what he wished to attain, and directed his course thither relentlessly. As a soldier he was a great leader of men, but Pitt's famous description of him as a heaven-born general is hardly appropriate. 'There is little trace', says Sir Charles Wilson truly, 'of skilful combination in his plans, and on some occasions he appears to have neglected the most obvious military precautions. To seek the enemy and, on finding him, to attack with headlong valour seems to have been

[1] *Speeches in the Trial of Warren Hastings*, ed. by E. A. Bond, vol. iv, pp. 329, 348.

his guiding principle, and his successes were due rather to his personal intrepidity, and to his power of inspiring large masses of men with confidence, than to studied plans or dexterous manœuvres.'[1] All his contemporaries in India, even when they hated and feared him, seem to have acknowledged his personal force. Early in his career he was led into courses that a strict morality or the standard of a later age would condemn, but Clive, like his great successor, Warren Hastings, was convinced of his own integrity. He never ceased to defend and even claim merit for the actions that were impugned. This aspect of his character is portrayed by Horace Walpole with a characteristic jibe, when he writes of Clive's great speech in his own defence: 'Though Lord Clive was so frank and high-spirited as to confess a whole folio of his Machiavellism, they were so ungenerous as to have a mind to punish him for assassination, forgery, treachery, and plunder, and it makes him very indignant.'[2] In spite of some faults, there is the stamp of grandeur on all Clive's words and actions. His last sad act showed that, though he valued overmuch the material things of this world, they counted as nothing with him in comparison with what he reckoned to be the loss of his honour. His headlong valour on the battlefield, his splendid daring and audacity in a political crisis, his moral courage in facing disaffected and mutinous subordinates, his force and fire in debate, all justify the lofty verdict of Lord Macaulay that our island 'has scarcely ever produced a man more truly great, either in arms or in council'.

[1] *Lord Clive* (English Men of Action Series), p. 57.
[2] *Letters of Horace Walpole*, P. Toynbee, vol. xiii, p. 277.

CHAPTER XV

THE ADMINISTRATION OF WARREN HASTINGS TO THE END OF THE ROHILLA WAR

A PERIOD of five years elapsed between the final departure of Clive from India and the appointment to the governorship of Bengal of Warren Hastings. Two men of mediocre ability, Verelst (1767–9) and Cartier (1770–2), bridged over the interval. Their periods of office were signally uneventful, and only revealed the administrative failure of Clive's scheme for a double government. The puppet Nawab and his officers proved quite unable to repress the private trading and extortion of the Company's servants; many of the abuses which had been temporarily checked by the reforming hand of Clive once more made their appearance. In 1769–70 a terrible famine visited Bengal. It has been estimated that one-third of the population, that is, about ten million souls, perished of starvation and disease, and one-third of the cultivated land became waste. 'The scene of misery that intervened', wrote one of the Company's servants in 1770, 'and still continues, shocks humanity too much to bear description. Certain it is, that in several parts the living have fed on the dead.'[1] Many of the Company's servants were accused, with too much reason, of making large profits by buying up rice and retailing it at high prices. The revenue, as Warren Hastings admitted, was collected with cruel severity; less than five per cent. of the land tax was remitted at the time of greatest distress, and ten per cent. was actually added to it in the

[1] *The Annals of Rural Bengal*, Sir W. W. Hunter, p. 410.

following year. This terrible calamity whose ravages two generations failed to repair',[1] had far-reaching social and economic effects. Many of the farmers of the revenue and the old aristocratic families were ruined. Bengal scarcely began to recover its former prosperity till after the Permanent Settlement of 1793. While the Company's servants made large private fortunes, the profits of the Company itself from this time steadily decreased till, as we shall see, its credit became so impaired that the state was forced to step in and regulate its affairs.

In southern India an era of troubles began. The relations of the Presidency of Madras with Muhammad Ali, the Nawab of the Carnatic, were necessarily very difficult. Indeed, the double government of Madras, though it has attracted less attention, produced perhaps even more discredit and corruption than that of Bengal. Outside the frontiers of the Carnatic, three native powers—Mysore under Haidar Ali, an extremely able and ruthless usurper who had dispossessed the old royal house; the Maratha confederacy; and the Nizam of Hyderabad—were striving for supremacy, and they alternately courted the British power or combined together to threaten its existence. Cool heads and a consistent policy were necessary, if the Presidency were to escape the pitfalls on every side. Unfortunately the Madras Council embarked on a course of war and diplomacy which ended in discredit and disaster. Their position was much weaker than that of Bengal in regard to the native powers. Their nominal ally, the Nizam, only acquiesced in the surrender of the Northern Circars (for which Clive had procured an imperial grant) on promise of a yearly tribute. In 1765 the Council made an alliance with the Nizam, which involved their supporting him against Haidar Ali and the Marathas. The Nizam was, from the

[1] *The Annals of Rural Bengal*, Sir W. W. Hunter, p. 19.

first, intriguing with the enemy, though with extraordinary obstinacy the Madras Council refused to recognize a fact that was plain enough to their officers in the field. The British troops, however, even after the Nizam had openly thrown in his lot with Mysore and the Marathas, proved strong enough, under the leadership of Colonel Smith, to defeat the combined forces at the Pass of Changama and Trinomali in 1767. In spite of these victories, the Presidency, by the treaty of Masulipatam in 1768, concluded a humiliating and ill-advised peace with the Nizam, involving terms that needlessly invited the hostility of Haidar Ali. 'You have brought us into such a labyrinth of difficulties', wrote the Court of Directors, 'that we do not see how we shall be extricated from them.'[1] The Court had just previously stated their considered policy as to their Indian dominions in these words: 'The *Diwani* of Bengal, Bihar, and Orissa, with the possessions we hold in those provinces, are the utmost limits of our views on that side of India: on the Coast, the protection of the Carnatic and the possession of the Circars, free from all engagements to support the Subah of the Deccan, or even with the Circars, preserving only influence enough over any country power who may hold them, to keep the French from settling in them; and on the Bombay side the dependencies thereon, the possessions of Salsette, Bassein, and the castle of Surat. . . . Much has been wrote from you and our servants in Bengal on the necessity of checking the Marathas, which may in some degree be proper; but it is not for the Company to take the part of umpires of Hindustan . . . we wish to see the present Indian powers remain as a check one upon another without our interfering.'[2]

Though the Nizam took no further part in the war,

[1] *Rise and Progress of the British Power in India*, P. Auber, vol. i, p. 233.

[2] *A Comprehensive History of India*, H. Beveridge, vol. ii. p. 261.

hostilities continued with Haidar Ali; and, after a lamentable series of blunders on the part of the English, the ruler of Mysore practically dictated peace on his own terms almost under the walls of Madras in 1769. All conquests made by either side were restored, and the British, with criminal folly, undertook to aid the ruler of Mysore if he were attacked by another power. This calamitous clause only plunged them into fresh difficulties. In 1771 a Maratha army invaded Mysore, and Haidar Ali applied for British help: that help was not forthcoming; the Madras Presidency earned at once the bitter animosity of a relentless foe, and incurred the discredit of repudiating their treaty obligations.

The administration of Warren Hastings falls into two unequal divisions — the first from April 13, 1772, to October 19, 1774, when he was Governor of Fort William in Bengal; and the second from October 20, 1774, to February 8, 1785, when he became 'Governor-General of the Presidency of Fort William in Bengal', under the constitution set up by the Regulating Act. The title was a cumbrous one, and the wording of it emphasizes the fact that he was by no means supreme over Madras and Bombay. There was as yet no 'Governor-General of India'.

The career of Warren Hastings has always been, and probably always will be, a subject of controversy. His enemies in his lifetime were fierce, unscrupulous, and relentless. They transcended all reason and decorum in their attacks upon his name and fame. Many of his actions were grotesquely misrepresented, and unworthy motives were freely imputed. Where criticism was permissible, and temperate disapproval would not have been out of place, the wildest invective was indulged in. Hence came a natural reaction. Of late years, the apologists of Hastings have held the field. It may be admitted at once that in most cases the charges of his adversaries have been completely disproved. In some, alleged crimes and misdemeanours have been shown

conclusively to be mere errors of judgement, venal and excusable in the difficult position in which Hastings found himself. But the zeal of Hastings's supporters has sometimes outrun their discretion. There remain some few incidents which it is only possible to justify entirely by a rather desperate casuistry. It is the fashion sometimes to speak as though the only censures on Warren Hastings came from Burke, Macaulay, and James Mill; but almost all the older school of Indian historians, Thornton, Marshman, and H. Beveridge, condemn in temperate language some parts of his policy, and in the case of Thornton and Marshman there was assuredly no natural bias against the great Governor-General. Their sympathies were always naturally with the men on the spot, the representatives of the Company in India, rather than with the home government.

In the present work it would be impossible to enter into details of these great controversies. The writer's conclusions have been based on a careful review of the evidence, and when he dissents from the judgement of modern biographers of Hastings it must be understood that he has given their arguments the most careful consideration.

Immediately on his succession Warren Hastings introduced important administrative reforms. The subject is severely technical, and only the barest outlines can be given here. Clive's dual system was now thoroughly discredited, and the Court of Directors decided to 'stand forth as Diwan', i. e. collect the revenues of the provinces of Bengal, Bihar, and Orissa through the agency of their own servants. Hastings, at their orders, removed from office the Deputy Nawabs of Bengal and Bihar. These men were prosecuted for peculations, but were honourably acquitted. Their offices were abolished, a Board of Revenue was established, and the treasury was transferred from Murshidabad to Calcutta. Great gains were at once apparent; for though Hastings, taking advantage of a fresh succession, cut down the Nawab's

allowance from 32 to 16 lakhs of rupees, he was able, through economies in details and the abolition of sinecure offices, to hand over to the Company's pensioner a larger net sum. In 1772, in the face of many difficulties, he carried out a quinquennial settlement of the land revenues, and appointed English officials, now first called 'collectors', aided by native assistants, to superintend the districts. It may be admitted that this settlement was only a qualified success, but that was solely due to the inherent difficulties of the problem, and the criticisms passed on Hastings were factious and ungenerous. At the end of five years (1777) annual settlements were substituted, and continued till the Permanent Settlement of Cornwallis. The collectors dispensed civil law, but natives still presided over the criminal courts of the districts. Hastings set up two Courts of Appeal in Calcutta—the *Sadr Diwani Adalat* (supreme civil court), presided over by the Governor-General and two members of Council; and the *Sadr Nizamat Adalat* (supreme criminal court), the president of which was a native judge. All these reforms were logical steps to those of a more fundamental nature introduced by Cornwallis; and Hastings, had he been given free scope, would have gone further than the home authorities, and placed the administration of criminal affairs also in British hands. The changes were carried through with conspicuous ability, and Warren Hastings well and firmly laid (in the words of Sir William Hunter) 'the foundations of the system of civil administration' on which 'the superstructure was raised by Cornwallis'.[1]

Hastings had next to turn his attention to foreign policy. Clive's scheme for protecting the Bengal frontiers, after working well for five years, was in danger of collapsing. The Marathas, recovering from their terrible defeat in 1761 at Panipat, had crossed the Narbada again in 1769 raided through Rajputana and Rohilkhand, and were now threa-

[1] *The Imperial Gazetteer of India*, vol. [illegible] 486.

ing danger to British territories. They began to intrigue with the puppet Emperor, that 'wretched king of shreds and patches', as Hastings called him, who had been subsisting at Allahabad on the revenues paid to him by the East India Company. The Marathas offered to place the Emperor on the throne of Delhi, and, in spite of the earnest expostulations of the British that he should not entrust himself to the hands of the hereditary rebels against the Mughal throne, he accepted their proposal. Sindhia, in December, 1771, escorted him into his capital. He at once found, as the British had predicted, that he was a mere state prisoner in the hands of his nominal protectors, and he was forced to hand over to the Marathas the districts of Kora and Allahabad, which had been given to him as an act of grace by Clive. It was impossible to imagine a more awkward and critical position for the Governor-General. To permit Maratha hordes to occupy the districts was to surrender the outworks of Bengal to the enemy; to continue paying the Emperor's subsidy was really to replenish their treasury. Both courses were impossible to a practical politician, and yet probably no other was free from legal and technical objections. Hastings adopted a bold policy. He decided to discontinue the tribute to Shah Alam, which as a matter of fact had not been paid since the Bengal famine of 1769–70; by the Treaty of Benares he restored Kora and Allahabad to the ruler of Oudh for fifty lakhs of rupees in addition to a subsidy for the maintenance of a garrison of the Company's troops. For this drastic solution of the difficulty Hastings has been roundly attacked, but he seems to have been abundantly justified. He held that Clive surrendered these districts to the Emperor as living under British protection. The Emperor had forfeited them morally, if not legally, when he parted with them to the Company's potential enemies. There are political situations where ordinary formulae and rules seem hopelessly to break

down, and this was one of them. All temperate and responsible opinion has supported Hastings's conduct in a most difficult crisis.

The sale of Kora and Allahabad to the Nawab of Oudh was ratified by the Treaty of Benares, September 1773, and Hastings, in personal interviews with Shuja-ud-daula, was led into the policy which ended in the Rohilla war. The facts are briefly as follows. Rohilkhand was a fertile belt of country with an area of 12,000 square miles and a population of about 6,000,000, skirting the base of the Himalayas to the north-west of Oudh. The bulk of the population were Hindus, but the ruling race were Rohillas and Pathans—Muhammadans coming originally from Afghanistan. The government was a loose and ill-defined confederacy of chiefs, presided over by Hafiz Rahmat Khan, the ablest and strongest of their number. From about the year 1770 the Marathas hung threateningly on the frontiers of Rohilkhand and Oudh. A tortuous scene of intrigue and negotiation followed. The Nawab of Oudh and Hafiz Rahmat Khan at one time meditated a coalition for mutual defence against the Marathas; at another time each ruler contemplated joining the Marathas against the other. The three parties were, as Sir John Strachey says, 'all utterly unscrupulous, and each knew that no trust could be placed in either of the others'.[1] Finally, however, in June 1772, a treaty was concluded between the Rohillas and Oudh, by which it was agreed that, if the Marathas invaded Rohilkhand, the Nawab Wazir should come to the rescue of the invaded country; and if he were successful in obliging the Marathas to retire by peace or war, he should receive a sum of 40 lakhs from the Rohillas. The treaty was signed in the presence of Sir Robert Barker, who witnessed the signatures of the contracting parties. In 1773 the Marathas invaded Rohilkhand: a demonstration was made against them by the Nawab of

[1] *Hastings and the Rohilla War*, Sir John Strachey p. 45.

Oudh supported by a British contingent, and they retired. Shuja-ud-daula promptly demanded the stipulated sum of 40 lakhs, and Hafiz evaded payment.

At Benares Shuja-ud-daula proposed that the English, in return for a large subsidy, should lend him a brigade to conquer the Rohillas, as a penalty for their breach of the treaty. Hastings was attracted to the proposal, partly from the strategical advantage that would be gained 'by extending the boundary of Oudh to the natural barrier formed by the chain of hills and the Ganges and their junction', partly from the opportunity of replenishing the coffers of the Company in a time of need. But he recognized at this time, at any rate, that there were other objections to the scheme, and he gave a rather reluctant assent, apparently hoping that the need for sending British troops would never arise. However, in January 1774, the Nawab of Oudh demanded the promised aid. A British brigade under Colonel Champion joined him, and their united forces invaded Rohilkhand on April 17. The decisive battle was fought at Miranpur Katra six days later, and Hafiz Rahmat Khan, who had shown considerable strategic skill, was killed fighting bravely. About 20,000 Rohillas were banished from the country, which was incorporated with the dominions of Shuja-ud-daula of Oudh.

Endless controversy has raged round the policy of the Rohilla war. It formed one of the main counts for the attacks on Hastings in Parliament, and it has been severely condemned, not only by Macaulay and Mill, but by most of the older school of Anglo-Indian historians. The case against Hastings was grotesquely exaggerated by the venom of Francis, the eloquence of Burke, the prejudice of Mill, and the over-charged metaphors and similes of Macaulay. Hastings was depicted as an unscrupulous schemer, who had sold the lives and liberties of a free people for filthy lucre, and stood callously by while nameless atrocities were perpetrated. The Rohillas were described as a simple pastoral

people, patterns of antique virtue, and their adversary, Shuja-ud-daula, as a monster of depravity and cruelty.

Modern criticism dispenses altogether with this kind of invective. The question of the origin of the Rohilla race is really quite irrelevant to the point at issue. Burke and his followers were mistaken in supposing that they had any long prescriptive right to the territories they ruled. They were a plundering tribe, who had only established their power over the Hindu population of Rohilkhand for about twenty-five years. On the other hand, their claim was quite as good as that of most of the Indian states of the day, who had risen on the ruins of Mughal power. If the war were wicked, it was not less so because the Rohillas had not long established their sovereignty in the country.

But it can certainly be established that the Nawab had a legal and technical case against his enemies for infringing a treaty, which will pass muster. Military operations were probably not attended with any worse excesses than were common in India at this period, though it is perhaps going a little too far to say that the campaign 'had been carried on with an absence of violence and bloodshed and generally with a degree of humanity altogether unusual in Indian warfare'.[1] Though Champion's criticisms of his native allies were coloured by dissatisfaction at his position in regard to them, and jealousy of the booty they acquired, yet he undoubtedly committed himself to the assertions that he had been obliged to shut his eyes 'against a wanton display of violence and oppression, of inhumanity and cruelty', and that 'the whole army were witnesses of scenes that cannot be described'. These positive assertions must at the time must have contained some basis of fact, and we can hardly regard them as completely discredited by the later statements of Champion himself, made twelve years later at the Parliamentary inquiry, or the evidence of other officers

[1] *Hastings and the Rohilla War*, Sir John Strachey, p. 233.

on the same occasion, who may have had reasons for minimizing the facts. But they were undoubtedly exaggerated, and Macaulay and Mill were, to some extent naturally, misled by them. The question matters the less because it is quite certain that Hastings did his best, by strong and dignified protests, to check any brutalities the moment his attention was called to them, and there is no truth at all in the insinuation that he connived at them.

From all the graver charges, then, Hastings may be fully acquitted; but it does not really follow, as many of his modern defenders seem to suppose, that his policy was above reasonable criticism any more than that of other statesmen, however supremely able they might be. And first of all, exception may, perhaps, be taken to it even from the point of view of expediency. We have seen that the Governor-General himself, at the time of the Treaty of Benares, seriously doubted the wisdom of acceding to the Nawab Wazir's request for aid. He felt the time was unfavourable, since 'the Company at home was exposed to popular clamour, all its measures liable to be canvassed in Parliament, their charter drawing to a close, and His Majesty's Ministers unquestionably ready to take advantage of every unfavourable circumstance in the negotiations for its renewal'.[1] The reasons for letting the whole business alone could hardly have been better stated. The best course probably would have been to tell the Nawab Wazir that he must settle his differences with the Rohillas as he best could. Hastings afterwards declared that the Company were bound to intervene as having guaranteed the treaty; but this was an afterthought, and Sir Robert Barker had merely witnessed the signatures of both sides. To suggest that his doing so committed the Company to seeing that the treaty was fulfilled was disingenuous. Hastings showed throughout the early stages of the business a vacillation that was

[1] *Hastings and the Rohilla War*, Sir John Strachey, p. 121.

unusual with him, and he failed to handle the situation with his usual firmness. To give a reluctant assent in a matter of such importance, with the lame half hope, half belief, that the occasion contemplated would never arise, is not impressive as statesmanship. There were other objections to the policy. It obviously broke the rule of the Directors against engaging in Indian warfare, and it is difficult to dissent from the judgement of Sir Alfred Lyall that an unfortunate precedent was created when British troops were lent to be employed against a people with whom the Company had no quarrel. Though the Hindus were not driven out of the country with the Rohillas, they can hardly have gained by the change of masters. The rule of Hafiz Rahmat had been mild and popular; we have Sir John Strachey's high authority for the statement that, under his strong personal control, the Hindu population was treated with greater consideration and received better protection than in any of the neighbouring provinces, with one exception.[1] The régime of Shuja-ud-daula proved weak and bad, and we know that under his successor Rohilkhand was shamefully misgoverned. The utmost, however, that can fairly be said against Hastings from the moral aspect, and it is not a very serious charge, is that his view of the business was, as Sir John Strachey admits, 'somewhat cynical', and that in his dispatches and minutes the financial advantages of the agreement with the Nawab appear unduly prominent.[2]

[1] *Hastings and the Rohilla War*, Sir John Strachey, p. 30.
[2] Ibid., pp. 113, 263.

CHAPTER XVI

WARREN HASTINGS. THE REGULATING ACT AND THE TRIAL OF NANDKUMAR

THE Rohilla war was the last important event of Hastings's first period of administration. His powers were considerably modified by the Regulating Act of Lord North, and it is necessary for a moment to retrace our steps, and examine the causes responsible for that measure.

Through the latter half of the eighteenth century we may trace the gradual growth of a feeling that the nation itself, through Parliament, rather than through a private trading company, however powerful and wealthy, must ultimately be responsible for British rule in India. Clive had himself, in 1759, suggested in a letter to Pitt that 'so large a sovereignty' as the *diwani* of Bengal, and the power that went with it, 'may possibly be an object too extensive for a mercantile company: and it is to be feared that they are not of themselves able, without the nation's assistance, to maintain so wide a dominion'. He went on to suggest that if the state were to take over Bengal, Indian revenues might go towards easing the burden of English taxpayers at home. But Pitt was not prepared at the moment to raise so serious a question, and gave an evasive reply, declaring that the affair was 'of a very nice nature'. During the fifteen years that followed the battle of Plassey, immense wealth was brought back from India by retired servants of the East India Company, who bought estates and rotten boroughs, and expected to be received on terms of social equality with the old landed aristocracy. The 'Nabobs', with their

orientalized ways and ostentatious expenditure, figure largely in the caricature and satire of the age.

Two important events sprang from their incursion: politicians conceived the idea of converting to the Exchequer some portion of this wealth, and the Proprietors of East India stock clamoured that a greater share of the profits of the trade should come to them, and less be intercepted by their servants in the East. After the news reached England of the acquisition of the *Diwani*, the Proprietors could no longer be restrained, and in spite of the opposition of the Court of Directors, who knew their real position was not as prosperous as it appeared, they raised the dividends on their stock in 1766 from six to ten per cent., and the next year to twelve and a half. From 1766 Parliament began to take —from the point of view of the Directors—an embarrassing interest in Indian affairs; and an active little band of members, prominent amongst whom were Beckford, Barré, and Nugent, constantly urged that the Company's Indian possessions belonged of right to the Crown, though, as was contended at the time, the Company had legally no such 'possessions', being technically a mere Zamindar for Shah Alam, the Mughal Emperor. The ministry, however, clearly shrank from any heroic solution of this problem, and avoided raising it in its full sense. They were quite ready to make so much use of the agitation as that a part of the Company's alleged wealth might be diverted to the depleted coffers of the state. But some form of compromise was the course that most commended itself to them. Accordingly Parliament, in 1767, declined to pass any sweeping measure, though it interfered openly and drastically in the affairs of the Company. It modified their internal constitution, limited the rate of dividend to be declared, and obliged them to pay to the Exchequer an annual sum of £400,000, in return for which they were allowed to retain their territorial acquisitions and revenues. This originally held good

for only two years, but subsequent Acts extended the period indefinitely. One measure for the relief of the Company is interesting, not for its intrinsic importance, but for the momentous and unforeseen consequences that followed it. The Company's teas exported to Ireland and the North American colonies were entitled to draw back the whole duty. It was a consignment of this tea that the Boston 'rebels', in 1773, threw into the sea. Thus curiously for a moment were the destinies of England's oversea dominions in two hemispheres linked together.

Neither the Court of Directors nor Parliament was yet satisfied, and in 1769 the former sent out three of their old servants, Vansittart, Colonel Forde, and Scrafton, as 'supervisors', with instructions to investigate every branch of the administration in India, and full powers to suspend, if necessary, even the Presidents and Councils. But this commission, which might have revolutionized the Company's government in the East, met with a tragic fate. The ship in which they sailed was never heard of again after leaving the Cape of Good Hope. Meanwhile, the hostile interest of the nation in the affairs of the Company had not diminished. A great outcry was raised when, after loans from the Bank had failed to buoy up their sinking credit, the Directors were forced to inform Lord North in 1772 that, unless they could obtain a loan of one million pounds from the state, they could not carry on their business. In that year, both a Select and a Secret Parliamentary Committee, of thirty-one and thirteen members respectively, were appointed, and began to publish those exhaustive reports which led incidentally to the attacks on Lord Clive already described. These reports showed that within nine years, that is, from 1757 to 1766, £2,169,665 had been distributed by natives of Bengal as presents to the Company's servants; and this sum did not include Clive's *jagir*, which capitalized would have represented a further sum of £600,000. Besides this,

£3,770,833 had been paid in compensation for losses incurred.[1] The reports of the two committees drove home the conviction that the independence of the Company must yield to the supremacy of Parliament.

Two Acts were passed in 1773, one of which granted a state loan to the Company, limited their dividends, and obliged them to submit their accounts to the Treasury; the second and more important, known as the Regulating Act, gave the Company a new constitution. The Directors were henceforth to be elected for four years, and one-fourth of their number were to retire every year, remaining at least one year out of office. There was to be a Governor-General of Bengal, assisted and controlled by four Councillors (for the voice of the majority was to bind the whole), the Governor-General being merely allowed a casting vote when there was an equal division of opinion. The Governor-General and Council were to have power to superintend and check the subordinate presidencies in their relations with native powers. The Directors were to lay before the Treasury all correspondence from India dealing with the revenues; and before a Secretary of State everything dealing with civil or military affairs and government. The first Governor-General and Councillors, Warren Hastings, Lieutenant-General Clavering, Monson, Barwell, and Philip Francis, were named in the Act. They were to hold office for five years, and future appointments were to be made by the Company. A Supreme Court of Judicature was set up at Calcutta, consisting of a Chief Justice (Sir Elijah Impey) and three puisne judges. Liberal salaries were granted, £25,000 to the Governor-General, £10,000 to each Councillor, and £8,000 to the Chief Justice.

The Regulating Act was a half-measure and is strously vague in many points. The titular authority of the Nawab of Bengal was left by implication in fact, and assertion

[1] *Reports of the House of Commons*, [illegible] 12.

was made of the sovereignty of the Crown or Company in India. The Council had the power to bring about a deadlock in the executive by overruling the Governor-General. The control of the supreme government at Calcutta over the other presidencies only applied to their powers of making war on, or concluding peace with, native states, and was qualified by the provision that, in the event of having received special orders from home or in the case of urgent necessity (of which they themselves could be the only judges) the subordinate governments could act without leave being first obtained from Bengal. Finally, and this was destined to have calamitous consequences, neither the field of jurisdiction of the Supreme Court nor the law it had to administer, nor its relations to the Council, were defined with sufficient accuracy. Some of the particular appointments made by Parliament were very unfortunate. Francis (identified by general consent with the author of the letters of Junius), Clavering, and Monson had no Indian experience, and they seem to have sailed for India with the idea deeply rooted in their minds that the government was corrupt and tyrannous. Francis, moreover, believed himself to be 'on the road to the governorship of Bengal', which he described as 'the first situation in the world attainable by a subject'.

The new Councillors (with the exception of Barwell, who was resident in India) arrived on October 19, 1774. The judges had landed two days before, and the new régime was formally inaugurated on the 20th. There ensued a six years' struggle which is probably unique in the history of administration. The Councillors began badly by quarrelling with the Governor-General on some petty point of ceremonial in his reception of them, and they proceeded to make an acrimonious attack on his whole policy and method of government. Any other man but Hastings would have been hounded from office. In the course of the next few

years he was often out-voted, and, though nominally at the head of the administration, had frequently to carry out a policy of which he disapproved. It was no ordinary opposition that he had to meet, for Francis was no ordinary man. Facing his chief across the council table, he criticized with a plausible, subtle, and vindictive ingenuity almost everything the latter suggested. Hastings could not rely upon support at home; he was ultimately censured by the Directors, and his recall more than once demanded by Resolutions of Parliament. There is something almost superhuman in the way he faced his enemies. From 1774 to 1776 he was generally overruled. Monson died in September 1776, and by the use of his casting vote Hastings regained control in the Council. In 1777, however, his rather ambiguous and ill-advised instructions to an agent in London resulted in the latter tendering the Governor-General's resignation. But Hastings, declaring his agent had exceeded his powers, refused to make way for Clavering; the Supreme Court upheld his decision, though they immediately afterwards rightly prevented a very ill-judged and high-handed attempt on his part to declare that Clavering had, by his action in the matter, forfeited his offices of Councillor and Commander-in-Chief. In 1777 Clavering also died, and in 1780 Hastings disabled Francis in a duel. His great enemy left India later in the same year. 'My antagonists', he wrote triumphantly, 'sickened, died, and fled', and from that time onward his position was established. He had charge of the government of India at the most critical and perilous period of British Indian history, but the struggle with his Council alone would have exhausted the powers of any but a very strong man. He was enveloped, as he said himself, in an atmosphere of 'dark allusions, mysterious insinuations, bitter invective, and ironical reflections'.

The first action of the new Councillors was to condemn

the Rohilla war. They recalled Middleton, the British Resident at Lucknow, and made a most unreasonable demand that the whole of his correspondence with the Governor-General, part of which was confidential, should be submitted to their inspection. They ordered Colonel Champion to make a peremptory demand on the Nawab of Oudh for the forty lakhs he had promised to the Company for the expulsion of the Marathas. They 'denounced', it has been said with truth, 'the Rohilla war as an abomination, and yet their great anxiety now was to pocket the wages of it'.[1] In reply to all this, Hastings with excellent reason contended that, whatever the rights of the case, the Rohilla affair belonged to the past administration and was on the point of being concluded, and therefore that the new government might have been satisfied with recording their disapproval of the enterprise. The real value of the new Councillors' sympathy with the native powers was seen by their treatment of Oudh. The Nawab Wazir died in January 1775, and they seized the occasion to force upon his successor a new treaty, increasing the subsidies to be paid by him for the use of British troops, and obliging him to surrender to the Company the sovereignty of the district of Benares. Hastings eloquently exposed the injustice and impolicy of this proceeding, in vain pointing out that it was a complete reversal of the Company's traditional friendship with Oudh.

The whole position of Hastings was undermined in the public eye by the procedure of the Council, and many of his enemies in Calcutta thought they saw an opportunity to bring about his ruin. Several charges of defalcations were produced against him by native informers, and in March 1775 Raja Nandkumar (Nuncomar), a Brahman of high rank, laid a letter before the Council charging him with having received, amongst other bribes, one of three and a

[1] *A Comprehensive History of India*, H. Beveridge, vol. ii, p. 365.

half lakhs of rupees from the widow of the old Nawab, Mir Jafar. The accusation was welcomed with indecent haste by Francis, Monson, and Clavering, who, without waiting for proof, recorded their opinion that 'there is no species of peculation from which the Governor-General has thought it reasonable to abstain'. Hastings absolutely declined to be arraigned at the Council board by 'so notoriously infamous' a man as Nandkumar. When the majority persisted in summoning the accuser, the Governor-General refused to meet him, declared the Council dissolved, and left the room. It has been pointed out that Hastings's case would have stood better had he courted inquiry and openly denied the truth of the accusation against him, which he never seems to have done. But he had good cause to object to the high-handed and insulting attitude of his colleagues on the Council, and he may have thought it would be difficult to prove his innocence before so openly prejudiced a court. There was further the fact that Hastings actually had received 150,000 rupees from the princess as entertainment money, when he visited Murshidabad, 'a transaction', as his strenuous defender Sir James Stephen[1] admits, 'which, if not positively illegal, was at least questionable', and which certainly ran counter to all the Company's instructions as to the acceptance of presents.

On the withdrawal of Hastings, the majority of the Council resolved that the sums in question had been received by the Governor-General, and required him to repay the amount into the Company's treasury. Hastings treated this resolution with disdain, and a few days later lodged a charge of conspiracy against Nandkumar and his accomplices. While this matter was still pending, Nandkumar himself was suddenly arrested, at the instance of a Calcutta merchant, on a charge of forgery unconnected with either

[1] *The Story of Nuncomar and the Impeachment of Sir Elijah Impey*, Sir J. F. Stephen, vol. i, p. 72.

his insinuations against Hastings or the latter's action for conspiracy. He was put on his trial before the Supreme Court, condemned to death, and executed. The charges against Hastings were dropped, and never proceeded with.

Men will probably never agree as to the meaning of this somewhat mysterious sequence of events, for the key to them lies in the ambiguous and doubtful region of secret motives and desires. The incident created an extraordinary impression, and it was naturally believed for a long time that Nandkumar had paid the penalty of death, nominally for forgery, but really for having dared to accuse the Governor-General. The matter, however, is one rather of biographical than of historical interest, and can only be very briefly dealt with here. Modern research regards the suggestion that Hastings and Impey deliberately schemed together to remove Nandkumar by a judicial murder as baseless.[1] There is certainly, as Pitt saw, not a vestige of solid proof for it. There are indeed many reasons against it. Hastings and Impey by no means always saw eye to eye with one another, as their quarrel in regard to the respective jurisdictions of the Supreme Court and the Council proved. At the trial Impey was only one of four judges, and therefore, unless the other three were either in the conspiracy or so hopelessly incompetent that they followed the Chief Justice blindly, the insinuation falls to the ground. The charge of forgery had originated in a natural way from long-standing litigation months before Nandkumar accused the Governor-General, and in the words of an authority, by no means excessively favourable to Hastings, 'That charge would, in the natural course of law, have been made at the

[1] Sir James Stephen's *Story of Nuncomar and Impey*, though a very able defence, is not quite the last word on the controversy that it is sometimes represented to be, as Sir Alfred Lyall—himself very favourable to Hastings—recognized. Those who wish to pursue the matter further should also read *The Trial of Maharaja Nanda Kumar*, by Mr. H. Beveridge.

very time when it was made, though Nandkumar had never become a willing tool in the hands of Messrs. Clavering, Monson, and Francis.'[1] Sir James Stephen claims to show that Impey tried the case fairly and patiently; that in his summing up he gave full weight to anything that could tell in favour of the prisoner; and that, though the evidence was not overwhelming, the verdict cannot be said to have gone against it. On the other hand, it was certainly unfortunate that the judges themselves cross-examined, and that somewhat severely, the prisoner's witnesses, on the alleged ground that counsel for the prosecution was incompetent, and that Sir Elijah Impey in his summing up laid it down that, if Nandkumar's defence was not believed, it must prove fatal to him. Impey no doubt spoke in good faith, but more Indian experience would have taught him that in the East, as Sir James Stephen admits, a good case is often bolstered up by perjury.

But even if we hold it established that there was no judicial murder, there was certainly something equivalent to a miscarriage of justice. For that, however, the Supreme Court in the first instance, and Hastings's opponents on the Council subsequently, were mainly responsible. However guilty Nandkumar may have been, the punishment of death was far too severe, and fine or imprisonment, as Sir James Stephen allows, would have been the appropriate penalty. It is very doubtful whether the Supreme Court had any jurisdiction over natives, and there is practically no doubt at all (though the point has been contested) that the English law making forgery a capital crime was not operative in India till many years after Nandkumar's alleged forgery had been committed.[2] Apart from all this, the Supreme Court had

[1] *A Comprehensive History of India*, H. Beveridge, vol. ii, p. 378.

[2] The judges no doubt acted in good faith, but Sir James Stephen admits that their view was 'opposed to an opinion which is so firmly established in India, and has been so often acted upon by the courts and the legislature that it can hardly be disputed'. See his *The Story of Nuncomar*, vol. ii, pp. 27–34. Also H. Beveridge, *The Trial of Maharaja Nanda Kumar*, pp. 210–12.

authority 'to reprieve and suspend the execution of any capital sentence, whenever there shall appear in their judgement a proper occasion for mercy'. Since the natives universally regarded forgery as a mere misdemeanour, this was just the occasion for the exercise of such discretionary power. But though the judges made an error of judgement and callously upheld the extreme letter of the law, it is unnecessary to impute to them corrupt motives. They appear to have been exceedingly jealous of their rights and privileges. They had not been long enough in India to adapt their legal theories to eastern ideas, and their attitude in this case is only consonant with their conduct throughout, which was one ill-judged attempt to apply the methods of English courts to the whole native population of Bengal. Impey especially seems to have held that a severe example was necessary to check the frequent occurrence of crimes of forgery in Bengal: in view of Nandkumar's widespread influence and great wealth he considered that any remission of his sentence would have suggested to the native mind that the Supreme Court had been corrupted. 'I had', he said, 'the dignity, integrity, independence, and utility of that court to maintain.'

One of the most difficult things to understand about this sinister business is why the majority of the Council, at any rate, did not petition the Supreme Court in Nandkumar's favour. Hastings perhaps could hardly have been expected to intercede for his adversary, though his admirers could wish he had shown such a noble magnanimity.[1] But Francis, Clavering, and Monson had every apparent reason, as Sir James Stephen shows, to petition for a reprieve on the ground that Nandkumar's execution would prevent the charges against Hastings from being properly investigated,

[1] It should be noted that Mr. H. Beveridge, in *The Trial of Maharaja Nanda Kumar*, claims to have shown (and gives some evidence for his contention) that a private secretary and dependent of Hastings exerted himself to prevent a respite being granted to the condemned man.

and that the execution of an accuser of the Governor-General might well be misconstrued by the natives. They were afraid to have anything to do with such a petition, and Nandkumar went to his doom without a protest from them. Mr. Forrest's only theory that will explain their conduct is that they had ceased themselves to believe in his charges, and were relieved to see him put out of the way. Francis may even have thought that Nandkumar dead would be a more potent weapon against the Governor-General than Nandkumar living, and may have foreseen the use that might afterwards be made of his execution. At the time he himself described as 'wholly unsupported and libellous' the suggestion made in a final petition of Nandkumar that there was a conspiracy between the judges and the Governor-General, though a few weeks afterwards we find him adopting the suggestion and giving it his approval.

CHAPTER XVII

WARREN HASTINGS. WARS IN WESTERN AND SOUTHERN INDIA

We must now turn from Bengal to western and southern India. Over Bombay and Madras the Regulating Act, as we have seen, had given the Bengal government a control that was none too definite. The subordinate Presidencies at this time, especially Madras, were administered by very incapable men, and their history is complicated and confused. Broadly speaking, it may be said that they succeeded in embroiling themselves in wars with almost all the native powers of southern and central India, till in 1780 the foundations of British rule were shaken to their base. The control of Hastings over the policy of Bombay and Madras at the beginning was almost non-existent, for either he could not impose his will upon them, or he was outvoted in his own Council; and thus it was often the opinions of the recalcitrant triumvirate, Francis, Monson, and Clavering, rather than those of the Governor-General, that were ultimately forced upon the provincial governments. Hastings was frequently left the dismal choice between wresting what success he could from a plan of action of which he had disapproved, or disowning and cashiering his subordinates. He cannot fairly, except perhaps in one instance, be blamed for the welter of 'unjust and rather disreputable wars', bad diplomacy, and general mismanagement which made up the history of the Deccan under his governor-generalship. As briefly as possible the course of events must now be summarized. In March 1775 the Bombay

authorities, ignoring the claim of the Regulating Act in regard to the inter-relations of the supreme and subordinate governments, pledged themselves by the Treaty of Surat to support a pretender to the Peshwaship in return for the cession to themselves of Bassein and the island of Salsette, which they had already, by a high-handed action, occupied. They announced the *fait accompli* to their superiors at Bengal. The Governor-General concurred with his Council in stigmatizing their proceedings as 'impolitic, dangerous, unauthorized, and unjust', but there his agreement with the majority at his Council board ended. Since the Bombay administration had already commenced hostilities and won some success, though at a heavy cost, he argued that they must be supported in continuing the war till peace could be made on advantageous terms. But he was overruled, and Colonel Upton was sent direct from Calcutta to Poona to conclude the Treaty of Purandhar in March 1776, by which the English abandoned the cause of Raghunath Rao the Pretender, usually known as Raghoba, on condition of being allowed to retain Salsette. The Court of Directors unexpectedly and rather inconsistently—in view of their decided opinion against entanglements with native powers—disapproved of this treaty, and in 1778 Hastings with their full consent renewed the alliance with Raghoba. On this occasion Francis seems decidedly to have been for once on the right, and Hastings and the Court on the wrong, side. The able minutes and protests of the former repay the most careful study. But Hastings by the exercise of his casting vote committed himself and the Company to a long and costly war against the Maratha confederacy, with whom in time, as we shall see, all the powerful native states of southern India became allied. It would be difficult to exaggerate the sinister effect of this unhappy decision upon the career of Hastings. Owing to this war and its complement, the war with Haidar Ali, added to it by the folly of

the Madras government, his resources were exhausted and he was driven to those questionable expedients for raising money which brought about his impeachment. The most cogent argument put forward by Hastings for a renewal of hostilities was the arrival at Poona in 1777 of a French agent, and the consequent fear of 'a repetition of the scene of wars and intrigues formerly acted on the coast of Coromandel'. This man, however, proved to be an impostor unauthorized by the French government. It was during the debates on the Maratha war that news arrived in India of the great disaster to British arms in North America—Burgoyne's surrender to General Gates at Saratoga (1777). Francis made the news an argument against 'hazarding offensive operations'. Hastings with his usual indomitable spirit replied: 'I hope that our affairs in America are not in the desperate situation in which they are described to be; but . . . if it be really true that the British arms and influence have suffered so severe a check in the western world, it is the more incumbent upon those who are charged with the interest of Great Britain in the East to exert themselves for the retrieval of the national loss.'[1]

We may here conclude the tale of events as they concerned western India. An expedition from Bombay, wretchedly led, concluded the disastrous convention of Wargaon in January 1779 (afterwards disowned by the civil authorities), by which all territorial possessions obtained by Bombay since 1773 were given up. Such successes as were gained by British arms were due to what his enemies styled 'the frantic military exploits' of the Governor-General. In 1780 Goddard made a brilliant march across India from the Jumna, took Ahmadabad, and, having crossed the Narbada, captured Bassein; while in the same year

[1] *Selections from the Letters, Despatches and other State Papers in the Foreign Department of the Government of India, 1772–1785*, G. W. Forrest, vol. ii, p. 402.

Popham caused a thrill throughout India by his escalade of Gwalior, a fortress universally deemed impregnable. But subsequent operations were less successful; Goddard made the one mistake of his career in April 1781 in a premature advance on Poona, and Hastings concluded a separate peace with Sindhia by skilful diplomacy, detached the Raja of Berar from the Maratha confederacy, and was glad to conclude the Treaty of Salbai in May 1782, by which all territory west of the Jumna was restored to Sindhia, Raghoba pensioned off by the Peshwa, and the *status quo* before the war re-established at Bombay. Since the British only retained Salsette—the exact position at the Treaty of Purandhar—the material gains of a costly and harassing four years' war were not, it must be confessed, very impressive. But the treaty at least secured peace with the Maratha powers for twenty years.

The Presidency of Madras during the decade 1770–80 was passing through a dismal epoch in its history. Its relation to Muhammad Ali, the titular Nawab of the Carnatic, in some way resembled that of Calcutta to the Subadar of Bengal. Muhammad depended just as much on British bayonets as his northern counterpart, but since Madras did not possess anything equivalent to the *Diwani* giving them executive and financial control over the Carnatic, a perilous amount of responsibility was left in the hands of their nominal suzerain. In 1770 and 1771 the British government tried the experiment of maintaining at his court, as plenipotentiaries independent of the Company, Sir John Lindsay and Sir Robert Harland, but the result was not successful and hopelessly compromised the Company with the Nawab. In 1773, just before Hastings conquered Rohilkhand for the Nawab of Oudh, the Madras authorities subdued and deposed the Raja of Tanjore, with whom they had no quarrel, in order to oblige Muhammad Ali. The latter demoralized and

corrupted the whole administration of the Presidency by his collusive financial dealings with the notorious Paul Benfield and other junior servants of the Company. From Muhammad Ali's transactions with these men sprang the huge scandal known as the Nawab of Arcot's debts. The historian Thornton hardly speaks too strongly when he says, 'the moral atmosphere of Madras appears at this time to have been pestilential'.[1] Within seven years two governors were dismissed from office by the Court of Directors and a third suspended by the Governor-General; while Lord Pigot, who had been sent out to restore the Raja of Tanjore, was actually deposed and imprisoned by his subordinates for the necessary though rather tactless opposition he had made to their dishonest dealings. The unhappy man died in prison in 1777, Hastings showing a strange lack of sympathy in his case, though, as Sir Alfred Lyall notes, he might have been expected to exhibit some fellow-feeling towards a governor in difficulties with his council. These open scandals and constant changes in the government naturally resulted in an inconsistent and chaotic policy which soon entangled the Presidency in the war already raging on the western side of India. The Nizam had long looked with growing disfavour on our alliance with Raghoba, but he made no movement till the Madras government tactlessly offended him. He then built up a terrible confederacy of practically all the native states whose power was worth anything. Mysore, Hyderabad, and Poona, supported by all the Maratha chieftains except the Gaikwar of Baroda, joined together for one desperate attack upon British rule in India. In July 1780 Haidar Ali poured his swarms of horsemen through the pass of Changama down upon the plains of the Carnatic, till the citizens of Madras could see from their walls the smoke of burning villages rolling skywards.

[1] *History of the British Empire in India*, vol. ii, p. 247.

The government of Madras had shown an absolute want of forethought and preparation in meeting this terrible invasion, thus described by Burke in a famous passage: 'He (Haidar Ali) became at length so confident of his force, so collected in his might, that he made no secret whatsoever of his dreadful resolution. . . . He drew from every quarter whatsoever a savage ferocity could add to his new rudiments in the art of destruction; and compounding all the materials of fury, havoc, and desolation into one black cloud, he hung for a while on the declivities of the mountains. Whilst the authors of all these evils were idly and stupidly gazing on this menacing meteor, which blackened all their horizon, it suddenly burst, and poured down the whole of its contents upon the plains of the Carnatic. Then ensued a scene of woe, the like of which no eye had seen, no heart conceived, and which no tongue can adequately tell. All the horrors of war before known or heard of were mercy to that new havoc. A storm of universal fire blasted every field, consumed every house, destroyed every temple. The miserable inhabitants fleeing from their flaming villages, in part were slaughtered; others, without regard to sex, to age, to the respect of rank, or sacredness of function—fathers torn from children, husbands from wives—enveloped in a whirlwind of cavalry, and amidst the goading spears of drivers, and the trampling of pursuing horses, were swept into captivity in an unknown and hostile land. Those who were able to evade this tempest, fled to the walled cities; but escaping from fire, sword, and exile they fell into the jaws of famine.' Overcharged by the orator's genius as this purple passage undoubtedly is, the position was serious enough. An English brigade under Baillie was surrounded and cut up after a gallant resistance. Munro, the victor of Baxar, smirched his reputation by flinging his artillery into the tank at Conjeveram, and retreating in panic to Madras, where he was hooted in the streets by

the indignant inhabitants. In October 1780 the capital of the Carnatic, Arcot, fell before Haidar Ali.

It is well to pause for a moment at this date, 1780–1, and examine the position as Hastings had to face it—in his own words, a 'war either actual or impending in every quarter and with every power in Hindustan'. 'The fortunes of the English in India', says Sir Alfred Lyall, 'had fallen to their lowest water-mark.' Nor were the dangers from Indian powers the only ones: France had declared war in 1778, and though Chandarnagar and Pondicherry, the latter gallantly defended by Bellecombe, had been captured in October, the French were known to be preparing a formidable expedition from home, hoping to recover their old prestige by fishing in the troubled Deccan waters. There could be little hope of help from England, now standing desperately at bay and confronting a coalition of France, Spain, Holland, and the revolting North American States.

Though Hastings had in some measure brought these troubles upon himself—for the Indian complications sprang mainly from the ill-judged renewal of the alliance with Raghoba in 1778, which he had only succeeded in carrying by the exercise of his casting vote—yet the dauntless demeanour with which he faced them extorts our fullest admiration. He interfered vigorously in the affairs of the Madras Presidency, suspended the Governor and sent the old veteran Sir Eyre Coote from Bengal, with all possible reinforcements and supplies, 'as the only possible instrument to retrieve our past disgraces'. He followed this up by dispatching Pearce in January 1781 to make his famous overland march from Bengal to Madras. He seconded the efforts of his captains in the field by his indefatigable diplomacy. He detached two of the most formidable members of the hostile coalition, winning over early in 1781 the Raja of Berar, who had for some time threatened an invasion of Bengal from the south, and concluding a treaty with Sindhia in October of the same

year, by which the Maratha chief engaged to negotiate a peace between the other belligerents and the British. The result was the Treaty of Salbai in May 1782 (see supra, p. 194), which isolated Haidar Ali by withdrawing from him the aid of all the Maratha powers.

Meanwhile, in southern India, Eyre Coote, revisiting the scenes of his former fame twenty years before, defeated Haidar Ali with the loss of ten thousand men at Porto Novo on July 1, 1781. He next effected a junction with Pearce, who, having reached Pulicat, forty miles north of Madras, was threatened by Tipu, son of Haidar Ali; their combined forces fought a rather indecisive engagement in August at Pollilore. A month later Coote won a complete victory over Haidar Ali at Solingar. War had now been declared with the Dutch. In November 1781 Negapatam was taken, and in January 1782 the splendid harbour of Trincomali passed to the English. Here, however, came a check to their good fortune. Braithwaite, with a considerable force, after a desperate resistance lasting two days, was cut up in Tanjore by Tipu; and de Suffrein, the great French admiral, having first fought an indecisive engagement with Sir Edward Hughes on February 17 off Pulicat, landed more than two thousand French troops. Haidar Ali, forming a junction with them, captured Cuddalore from the British. Fortunately the French had strict orders to do nothing of importance till the arrival of Bussy, who, like Coote, was returning to the arena of his early exploits. But Bussy's arrival was long delayed owing to the increasing power of Great Britain on the seas. Though he started from Cadiz in November 1781, he found such difficulty in evading British squadrons that he was only able to join de Suffrein at Trincomali in March 1783, after long detentions at the Cape and the Isle of France. Moreover, he was unlucky in the hour of his coming. He landed at Cuddalore in April 1783, only to find that Haidar Ali had died in December of the preceding

year, and that Tipu, with whom he wished to co-operate, had departed to the Malabar coast, where things were not going too well for him. Coote and Bussy were not destined to renew their battles, for the brave old English general died on April 26. The command lapsed into the hands of General Stuart, an incapable man, who invested Cuddalore in a dilatory manner. Before anything effective could be done, news arrived of peace between England and France, and Tipu thus lost his last ally. The chief interest of the years 1782 and 1783 lies in the naval operations of the French and British fleets off the coasts of Coromandel and Ceylon. Between February 1782 and June 1783 de Suffrein and Hughes fought five severe engagements, all of them so stubbornly contested that they were regarded as drawn battles. De Suffrein's greatest success was the recapture of Trincomali in August 1782, after he had cleverly outwitted his opponent. Up to that date the French had, on the whole, the superiority in naval matters, though they had been greatly hampered for want of a base on land. But reinforcements sent from France were constantly intercepted in European waters, and the arrival of a new fleet under Sir R. Bickerton in October gave the preponderance to the British. After Haidar Ali's death operations were chiefly confined to the western theatre of the war. In May 1783 Tipu captured Bednore; but when he proceeded to the investment of Mangalore on the coast, Fullarton made a brilliant raid into Mysore from the south-west. In November 1783 he captured Palghat and occupied Coimbatore; he was advancing on Tipu's capital, Seringapatam, hoping to end the war with one daring stroke, when to his bitter chagrin he was recalled by the Madras authorities, who had already begun to negotiate for peace. The Governor there was now Lord Macartney, who had arrived in June 1781. He was an energetic man of considerable force of character, and his internal administration, where he showed himself straightforward and incor-

ruptible, was a great improvement on that of his predecessors; but he had no experience of the tortuous path of Indian diplomacy, and in the negotiations which ended the war he was no match for the wily Tipu, who succeeded in delaying matters till Mangalore had fallen. The Sultan treated the English envoys with studied disrespect, making it appear that the English had begged a peace, and that he had graciously granted it in the hour of victory. The Treaty of Mangalore, on the basis of *uti possidetis*, was signed in March 1784. Though Hastings strongly disapproved of its terms and tried in vain to amend them, the treaty at least enabled him, when he laid down his office a year later, to leave the British dominions at peace with all the native powers.

CHAPTER XVIII

CHAIT SINGH AND THE BEGAMS OF OUDH. THE IMPEACHMENT OF WARREN HASTINGS

THE wars described in the last chapter had been a very heavy drain on the Company's treasury, and Hastings, whose administration hitherto had been financially successful, had now to face something very like bankruptcy. In this period of difficulty and embarrassment he was led into those dealings with Chait Singh, the Raja of Benares, and the 'Begams', or Princesses, of Oudh, which furnished the most damaging counts at his trial, and have to some extent inevitably dimmed his reputation. The facts were briefly as follows: The Raja of Benares had formerly owed allegiance to Oudh, but by the treaty of 1775 he henceforward held his lands from the Company as overlord. In 1778, on the outbreak of hostilities with the French, Hastings considered that he was justified in demanding, over and above the ordinary tribute of 22½ lakhs (£225,000), a special sum of 5 lakhs (£50,000) as a contribution for war expenses. The Council rather demurred to the right to 'demand', and preferred the word 'request'; but the Governor-General carried his point by suggesting that the question of right should be reserved for the Directors. The Raja asked that the exaction should be limited to a single year, and was punished for his 'contumacy' by being ordered to pay the whole forthwith instead of by instalments. Chait Singh then asked for six or seven months' indulgence, whereupon payment was demanded within five days, and he was told that if he

failed to comply he would be treated as though he had refused absolutely.

In 1779 the demand was repeated. The Raja remonstrated submissively enough, and objected that his agreement with the Company exempted him from all contributions beyond the tribute; but when British troops were ordered to march against him, he yielded, and paid the £50,000 and an additional fine of £2,000 for the expenses of the troops employed to coerce him.

In 1780 the demand for five lakhs was repeated; Chait Singh sent a confidential agent to Calcutta, and offered the Governor-General a present of two lakhs (about £20,000). Hastings at first refused, but finally accepted it. He was accused at the trial of having intended to appropriate this money, but this charge may be dismissed as groundless. The money was spent in the Company's service in equipping an expedition against Sindhia. At the same time, it is only fair to say that Hastings's critics had some reason to be led astray by the mystery in which he involved the matter at the time. Not wishing the rest of his Council to have control over the money or to know the source from which it was derived (and this was natural enough, for the only really upright course would have been to refuse it), he first spoke of it as a contribution from his own private estate, though, to safeguard himself, he revealed all the circumstances to the Director Sulivan as well as to the Accountant-General of the Company's treasury in Calcutta, and five months later informed the Directors that the money was not his own. But the five lakhs were exacted as before from Chait Singh, and apparently (though this is not certain) an additional fine was imposed for the effort to evade payment.

Attempts to gloss over this transaction had better be left to the thick-and-thin apologists of Hastings. It leaves upon the mind a most unpleasant impression of his attitude towards the unfortunate Raja. Hastings knew that the money was

only offered as a bribe, and would certainly not have been paid except to relieve Chait Singh of the larger contribution. There was some justice in the stinging comment of the eleventh Report of the Select Committee of 1783: 'The complication of cruelty and fraud in the transaction admits of few parallels. Mr. Hastings . . . displays himself as a zealous servant of the Company, bountifully giving from his own fortune . . . on the credit of supplies, derived from the gift of a man whom he treats with the utmost severity, and whom he accuses in this particular of disaffection to the Company's cause and interests. With £23,000 of the raja's money in his pocket, he persecutes him to his destruction.'[1]

Chait Singh was not yet free of requisitions. He was next required to furnish 2,000 cavalry—a demand, on his protests, reduced to 1,000. The Raja ultimately got together 500, with 500 matchlock men as substitutes, and sent word to the Governor-General that they were ready to obey his orders. But he received no answer,[2] for Hastings had determined to impose upon him an immense fine of fifty lakhs (£500,000). 'I was resolved', he said, 'to draw from his guilt the means of relief to the Company's distresses. In a word, I had determined to make him pay largely for his pardon or to exact a severe vengeance for his past delinquency.'

Hastings left Calcutta in July. Chait Singh hastened to Baxar, and abjectly humbled himself before the Governor-General, who, however, declined to give him an answer till he arrived at Benares. There, Hastings refused another personal interview, and submitted his demands in writing. In answer he received a letter from the Raja in self-defence, which an impartial judge can only regard as perfectly respectful, and, considering the way he had been treated,

[1] *Reports of the House of Commons*, vol. vi, p. 582. The rupee was then reckoned at a little over 2*s.* 3*d.*

[2] Hastings himself admits that Chait Singh probably received no reply. See his *Narrative of the Insurrection which happened in the Zemeendary of Benares.*

extraordinarily moderate. Hastings, however, pronounced it to be 'not only unsatisfactory in substance but offensive in style', and though he had only a weak escort he had Chait Singh put under arrest. But though the Raja quietly submitted, this indignity placed upon him in his own capital was more than his troops could stand. They rose suddenly, without his connivance, and massacred the English sepoys with three officers. Chait Singh himself, fearing the consequences, made his escape in the general confusion. Hastings was in great peril, and was forced to fly for safety to Chunar. The rising became very serious, but the Governor-General showed his customary coolness and resource, and, summoning all available forces to his aid, defeated his enemies. Chait Singh, protesting his innocence of the massacre, was driven out of the country and found an asylum at Gwalior. His domains were declared forfeit and were conferred upon his nephew, who had henceforth to pay a tribute of forty lakhs, instead of twenty-two and a half, to Calcutta.

On this transaction some brief comments must be made. Modern apologists of Hastings either defend it by understating the facts, or find it convenient to slur it over. The whole proceeding was really indefensible. It is true that the Managers of the Impeachment overstated their case, confused the issues by lack of legal training, and used the most unwarrantable language. Hastings's defenders have a right to say that he had no thought of private gain, that his action was not perhaps more high-handed than many of those of Lord Wellesley, nor more unrighteous than Sir Charles Napier's treatment of the Amirs of Sind, and to point out that neither of these eminent men was impeached. But it does not follow that the episode was above criticism. Much time and trouble were expended at the trial in discussing the question whether Chait Singh was a Raja or a mere Zamindar. This point is really immaterial. A more important one is whether the Company had not definitely engaged

in 1775 to levy no further contributions from Chait Singh as long as he paid his stipulated tribute. Wilson, in his notes on Mill, maintains that there was only a resolution of the Council to that effect, but no treaty. We now know, however, that there was a definite agreement with Chait Singh of July 5, 1775, that while he paid his contribution 'no demands shall be made upon him by the Honble Company, of any kind, or on any pretence whatsoever, nor shall any person be allowed to interfere with his authority, or to disturb the peace of his country'.[1] Wilson further states that a later *Sunnad* or grant of 1776 declared all former *Sunnads* to become null and void. He mentions that the prosecutors of Hastings affirmed that the *Sunnad* was altered in compliance with the representations of Chait Singh, but replies that they could not prove that any other *Sunnad* was ever executed.[2] But again, we now know that

[1] *Selections from the Letters, Despatches and other State Papers in the Foreign Department of the Government of India, 1772–1785.* Ed. by G. W. Forrest, vol. ii, p. 402. The extract consists of the draft agreement with Chait Singh produced by Warren Hastings at the secret consultations of the Bengal Council, June 12, 1775. Sir George Forrest prints less than half of the proceedings of that day, without any marks of omission to show that the entry is incomplete. The full account may be read in *Reports from Committees of the House of Commons* (1804), vol. v, pp. 618–19. The portion omitted, though no doubt this is accidental, contains statements of Warren Hastings which tell strongly against Sir George Forrest's view of the Chait Singh incident. Hastings says, almost prophetically, that without some such an arrangement Chait Singh 'will expect from every change of government, additional demands to be made upon him, and will of course descend to all the arts of intrigue and concealment practised by other dependent Rajahs. Hastings actually proposed that Chait Singh should pay his revenue at Patna and not at Benares, 'because it would not frustrate the intention of rendering the Rajah independent,' and for fear lest the influence of a Resident at the latter place 'might eventually draw on him severe restrictions, and end in reducing him to the mean and depraved state of a mere zamindar.' Sir George Forrest also omits all record of the fact that the agreement was reconsidered on July 5, and, with some modifications in detail, was agreed to by the whole Council. The terms of the agreement were communicated to Chait Singh by the instructions of the Council to Fowke. August 24, 1775, *Reports from Committees of the House of Commons*, vol. v, p. 466.

[2] *History of British India*, vol. iv, p. 256 (ed. 1858).

the prosecutors were right, that the words objected to were altered, a revised *Sunnad* given to Chait Singh, and the original draft recalled.[1] Therefore the agreement of 1775 was the one still regulating the relations between the Raja and the Company. The Council at Calcutta, though now consisting only of two persons very friendly disposed to Hastings, were obviously much embarrassed by the escapades of the Governor-General, and asked themselves three questions: '*Firstly*, Where were the Governor-General's particular instructions for such extraordinary demands on Chait Singh? *Secondly*, Why was that chief put in arrest when he offered to make every concession? *Thirdly*, Whether there was not a compact between him and the Company which specified that he was only to pay them a certain annual tribute?'[2] Their answers to these questions show more desire than ability to support the Governor-General. It is noticeable that in dealing with the third, which, as they naïvely admit, 'involves much argument', the theory that the *Sunnad* of 1776 had contravened the agreement of 1775 plainly never occurred to them. Neither did it occur to the Court of Directors, who in their judgement on the transaction concluded that the compact of 1775 pledged the Company to make no further demands upon Chait Singh beyond the stipulated tribute. But, waiving the question of the prior agreement and assuming that Hastings had the right in emergencies to revise the Company's treaty obligations, the question still remains whether he did not act in a harsh and precipitate manner towards a dependent. Here the facts speak for themselves to all those who are not obsessed with the conviction that Hastings was faultless. Many modern writers seem to have persuaded themselves that he was justified; but the late Sir Alfred Lyall, not only

[1] *Selections from the Letters, Despatches*, &c., vol. ii, pp. 512, 549, 557. I am at a loss to understand Sir G. Forrest's comments on this point in his Introduction, vol. i, p. lxviii.

[2] *Selections from the Letters, Despatches*, &c., vol. iii, p. 831.

an historian but a man of affairs, who did not even in the capacity of biographer lose all critical sense, admits in his masterly little *Life* that 'Hastings must bear the blame of having provoked the insurrection at Benares.... He followed the recognized custom of needy Indian potentates . . . and whenever the English in India descend to the ordinary level of political morality among Asiatic potentates they lose all the advantages of the contrast'.[1] All those who have studied the records at first hand will also assent to Lyall's declaration that there was 'a touch of impolitic severity and precipitation about his proceedings against Chait Singh', suggesting that 'he was actuated by a certain degree of vindictiveness and private irritation' against him.

One final line of defence should be noticed, namely that the political position in India was so serious as to justify almost any means of obtaining money; and that Hastings made, and rightly made, expediency the sole criterion here. Then it can only be said that, moral considerations apart, the whole proceeding was a sorry failure; and, if utility is the sole test, the Governor-General's action stands condemned. He set forth to get money from the guilt of the Raja; he got nothing. He jeopardized his own safety in a manner which earned the criticism of Sir Eyre Coote, and was stigmatized by the Court of Directors as 'unwarrantable and impolitic'. By his precipitate act in arresting Chait Singh in his own capital amid 200,000 of his own countrymen, 420 miles from Calcutta, he brought a hornet's nest about his ears, and the Raja escaped with part of his wealth. Further, through his injudicious letter encouraging the army in the hope of plunder, all the rest of the treasure found (twenty-three lakhs of rupees) was divided up amongst the troops, and the total financial result to the Company was the cost of the hostilities that ensued. In the future, no doubt,

[1] *Warren Hastings*, by Sir Alfred Lyall (English Men of Action Series), pp. 126, 127.

the Company gained by the larger tribute exacted from the Raja of Benares, but at a great cost to the unhappy country. Hastings himself had declared in 1775 that the province of Chait Singh was 'as rich and well cultivated a territory as any district, perhaps, of the same extent in India'. In 1784, when he visited the country, he records that he 'was followed and fatigued by the clamours of the discontented inhabitants', and he declares that 'the cause existed principally in a defective if not a corrupt and oppressive administration'.[1]

The second incident was the famous case of the Begams, or Princesses, of Oudh. The Nawab Wazir of Oudh, Asaf-ud-daula, had for some years fallen into arrears with his subsidy to the Company. His mother and grandmother, the Begams, held large *jagirs* or landed estates and had inherited, though there was some doubt of the authenticity of the will, a valuable treasure from the late Nawab. The Nawab Wazir had long desired to obtain part of this wealth, which he claimed was unjustly withheld from him. However this might be, in 1775 the widow of Shuja-ud-daula on the representations of the British Resident agreed to pay her son £300,000, in addition to £260,000 already given to him, on condition that he and the Company guaranteed that he should make no further demands upon her. Hastings at the time was opposed to such a pledge being given, but he was outvoted in the Council and the agreement was made. In 1781 Asaf-ud-daula asked that the treaty with the Begams should no longer be considered valid, and that he might seize their treasure to pay his debt to the Company, and Hastings, badly in need of money, consented. The Governor-General justified this abrogation of treaty rights on the ground that the rebellious conduct of the Begams was a reason for withdrawing from them British protection. At

[1] *Selections from the Letters, Despatches*, &c., G. W. Forrest, vol. iii, p. 1082.

this point, however, the Nawab Wazir, who was thoroughly afraid of the 'uncommonly violent temper of his female relations', began to hang back, and he had to be screwed up by Hastings to the attempt to resume the *jagirs* and seize the treasure. 'You must not allow any negotiations or forbearance,' wrote the Governor-General to his agent in Oudh, 'but must prosecute both services until the Begams are at the entire mercy of the Nabob.'[1] British detachments were marched to Fyzabad to support the Nawab's troops, and the eunuchs who acted as stewards for the Begams were forced by imprisonment, fetters, starvation, and the threat, if not the actual infliction, of the lash to part with the hoarded treasure. Making every allowance for the difficulties of Hastings, it is impossible not to regret and condemn this proceeding. Even if we grant that the Begams were unjustly withholding state property from its rightful owner, and that the Company was not bound to maintain its deliberately given guarantee, yet the temperately worded verdict of Sir Alfred Lyall is the mildest form of censure that meets the case: 'The employment of personal severities, under the superintendence of British officers, in order to extract money from women and eunuchs, is an ignoble kind of undertaking; . . . to cancel the guarantee and leave the Nawab to deal with the recalcitrant princesses was justifiable; to push him on and actively assist in measures of coercion against women and eunuchs was conduct unworthy and indefensible.'[2] This point is of some importance, for a rather ill-judged attempt has lately been made to save Hastings's reputation. 'The cruelty', says Sir G. W. Forrest, 'practised by the Nawab and his servants has been greatly exaggerated, but it was sufficient to have justified the interference of the Resident. To have countenanced it by transmitting the orders of the Vizier

[1] Idem, vol. iii, p. 950.
[2] *Warren Hastings*, Sir A. Lyall, pp. 136, 137.

was a grave offence. But for what took place Hastings at Calcutta cannot be held responsible. He ordered the Resident not to permit any negotiation or forbearance, but there is a wide gulf between legitimate severity and cruelty.'[1]

Unfortunately for this comfortable doctrine it is quite clear from the extracts that Sir G. Forrest is editing that Hastings was the moving spirit throughout. He goaded on the reluctant Nawab, who protested that he was acting under compulsion, and we find two successive Residents informing the Governor-General, in answer to letters upbraiding them with being too mild, that they had gone as far as they deemed possible. Middleton writes in February 1782 apologizing for having admitted a 'temporary forbearance': 'I must also observe that no further rigour than that which I exerted could have been used against females in this country';[2] and Bristow in June quotes the opinion of the officer who commanded the troops, that 'all that force could do has been done'.[3] The eunuchs were seized in January and not released till December, and all this time the Residents were in constant communication with the Governor-General. It is quite obvious that they did not relish the work thrust upon them; that they could not satisfy Hastings's desire for coercion, and pleaded for gentler methods. The Governor-General himself, when Asaf-ud-daula repented of coercing the Begams, declared that the Nawab had been influenced by his minister to assume 'a very unbecoming tone of refusal, reproach, and resentment; in opposition to measures recommended by me, and even to acts done by my authority'.[4]

One other point must be briefly noticed. The defenders of Hastings maintain that the Begams were acting in

[1] *Selections from the State Papers of the Governors-General*, vol. i, p. 251.
[2] *Selections from the Letters, Despatches*, &c., vol. iii, p. 960.
[3] Idem, p. 969.
[4] Idem, p. 982.

complicity with Chait Singh, and that the Governor-General was convinced of the fact. To this it may be replied firstly, that if his treatment of the Raja of Benares was high-handed and oppressive—and it must certainly have appeared to be so at the time—it was sufficient to arouse the instincts of self-preservation in the hearts of any native rulers. The Court of Directors themselves declared, 'it nowhere appears from the papers at present in our possession that the Begams excited any commotions previous to the imprisonment of Chait Singh, and only armed themselves in consequence of that transaction, and it is probable that such conduct proceeded from motives of self-defence under an apprehension that they themselves might likewise be laid under unwarrantable accusations'. Secondly, the testimony to the fact is almost worthless, consisting of vague *ex post facto* statements of interested parties and hearsay evidence. Thirdly, were it true and Hastings convinced of it, the right and straightforward course would have been to produce the evidence at the time and openly to have demanded satisfaction from the Begams.

When all deductions are made for the great difficulties that beset him, it seems impossible altogether to acquit Hastings in these two famous cases. It is probable enough that, had it not been for the unexpected rising of Chait Singh's troops, which put everything to the test of the sword, Hastings would have lessened the fine he intended to inflict. But the point is that his harsh and precipitate attitude, culminating in the arrest of the Raja after the latter's abject submission, could have left no hope in the breast of that unfortunate man. The massacre of British troops (for which Chait Singh was not personally responsible) most disastrously embittered the whole question. But for that untoward incident, the Court of Directors might merely have reversed the Governor-General's action as impolitic and restored the Raja to his former position—a solution actually

suggested at the time by the Bengal Council[1]—and the affair would only have been remembered as one of a few errors of judgement in a long and otherwise glorious period of office. In the case of the Begams of Oudh, Hastings himself at the order of the Directors made partial restitution. He was naturally the kindest of men, but there was a note of relentlessness in his character when he was in difficulties, and it is clear that he had steeled himself in this instance to measures of unjust severity. He would have been glad to thrust the responsibility on his agents, and he wished his purpose to be carried out without knowing too accurately how it was affected.

To pass so much of censure on the Governor-General's conduct is not for one moment to condone the proceedings of the managers in the impeachment. They grossly exaggerated and distorted the facts, and used language which could only have applied to the worst excesses of the worst of tyrants. Above all, they assumed that Hastings's motives throughout were based on self-aggrandizement and corruption. This at any rate was absolutely untrue. His aim was the security and welfare of the Company and British dominion in India. But until we hold that mere expediency may override all considerations of ethical and political right, we must continue to regard his conduct on these occasions as a serious departure from the best traditions of British statesmanship in the East.

By the end of 1779 the quarrel between the executive and the judicature, the Council and the Supreme Court—those 'ermined interlopers', as they were called—to which we have already alluded, became an open scandal. The Council ordered the zamindars not to acknowledge the jurisdiction of the judges, and the judges declared the Governor-General and Council guilty of contempt of court.

[1] *Selections from the Letters, Despatches*, &c., G. W. Forrest, vol. iii, p. 795.

But the tension was suddenly ended. In 1780 Hastings conferred upon Sir Elijah Impey the Presidency of the *Sadr Diwani Adalat*, or Company's Court of Appeal, with a salary of £6,500 revocable at the will of the Governor-General and Council—an office which he was to hold in addition to his Chief Justiceship of the Supreme Court and salary of £8,000. Impey, although he accepted the salary, declared himself prepared to refund it if his appointment were not approved at home. From the point of view of Hastings this adroit solution of the problem had many advantages. It put an end to an intolerable situation, conciliated Impey, and anticipated by many years the policy which extended the appellate jurisdiction of the Supreme Court over the provincial courts of the province. But at home there was a vehement outcry on the ground that his action violated the spirit of the Regulating Act, the chief object of which was to render the Supreme Court independent of the Executive. The law officers of the Crown afterwards gave their opinion that there was nothing illegal in the appointment, but Parliament was not satisfied; it passed an Act in 1781 exempting the Governor-General and Council from the jurisdiction of the Supreme Court, and a year later recalled Impey, though the subsequent attempt to impeach him broke down. Sir James Stephen has ably defended Impey from the charge of having acted from corrupt motives, but he admits that the Chief Justice after his fierce conflicts with the Council was not well advised in accepting an arrangement, which at any rate gave the impression that he had compromised his independence. It certainly seems impossible to deny that Impey had an evil reputation in India. Cornwallis, who was not naturally censorious and would never say a word against Hastings, wrote in 1786 in alarm to Dundas, 'I trust you will not send out Sir Elijah Impey. All parties and descriptions of men agree about him'; and again in 1788, 'If you are in the

hanging mood, you may tuck up Sir Elijah Impey, without giving anybody the smallest concern'.[1]

Hastings spent eight months of 1784 in Benares and Oudh reorganizing the internal affairs and finances of the provinces, which were in the greatest distress partly through famine and partly through misgovernment. In Benares the rule of the new Raja had proved a poor substitute for the mild and comparatively equable sway of Chait Singh. On his return to Calcutta Hastings received the news of Pitt's India Act, and declaring that 'fifty Burkes, Foxes and Francises' could not have planned a worse measure, he acted on the resignation of his office which he had tendered early in the year, and left the shores of India in February 1785.

Pitt's famous statute was the culminating point of one of the recurrent periods of state inspection into East Indian affairs. For seven years after the passing of the Regulating Act (1773) popular attention had been mainly occupied with the rebellion of the North American Colonies and the war with France, but from 1780 India again attracted the notice of politicians. In 1781 a new Charter Act prolonged the Company's privileges for ten years and still further extended the control of the state over it in two directions: in the first place, three-quarters of any surplus, after a dividend of eight per cent. had been paid, was to go to the Treasury; secondly, as the Regulating Act had obliged the Court to communicate to ministers all dispatches received *from* India relative to revenue, civil, and military affairs, so they were now compelled to submit for inspection all such dispatches sent *to* India. In the same year Parliament appointed two committees, the first 'Select' and the second 'Secret', to inquire into the administration of justice in Bengal, and to investigate the causes of the war in the

[1] *Correspondence of . . . Marquess Cornwallis*, Charles Ross, vol. i, pp. 238, 310.

Carnatic. These committees presented voluminous reports, and in May 1782 the House of Commons resolved that Hastings and the President of Bombay should be recalled from office. The Proprietors of the East India Company sturdily refused to ratify this resolution merely in accordance with a vote of the House of Commons', and the fall of Rockingham's ministry saved the Governor-General. The coalition government of Fox and North took office in 1783, and Fox brought forward his India Bills. The main provisions of the most important were that for four years all political and military power should be transferred to seven Directors or Commissioners, to be appointed at first by Parliament and afterwards by the Crown: all commercial business was to be controlled by nine 'assistant directors', also to be nominated in the first instance by Parliament but afterwards by the Court of Proprietors. Pitt, in his fierce opposition to the Bills, seized upon the fact that the immensely valuable patronage of India would practically pass into the hands of the government, and to play upon the ever-present fear that the corrupting power of ministers would be extended was, in the eighteenth century, the surest method of rousing popular feeling. This, however, in face of the great Parliamentary preponderance of the coalition, would have been of little avail had not George III through his influence over the Lords been able to force a dissolution. The Bill passed the Commons by ample majorities, but was thrown out in the upper house by what Fox described as 'an infamous string of bed-chamber janissaries'. The coalition were promptly dismissed from office by the king, and on the appeal to the country a few months later were utterly defeated. The Whig Party was ruined. Pitt came into power for twenty years and carried his India Act in 1784. This measure practically made the East India Company, in everything except its patronage and commerce (now rapidly dwindling), a subordinate depart-

ment of state. Civil and military matters were to be controlled by six 'Commissioners for the affairs of India', popularly known as the 'Board of Control', consisting of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, one of the principal Secretaries of State, and four Privy Councillors. In practice the commission soon became a phantom body and all real power passed into the hands of the senior commissioner (other than the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Secretary of State), who was known as the President of the Board of Control. The orders of the commissioners were to be transmitted to India through a secret committee of the Directors, and the Court of Proprietors was deprived of any right to annul or suspend any resolution of the Directors approved of by the Board. The government of India was placed in the hands of a Governor-General and Council of three; and the subordinate Presidencies were made definitely subject to Bengal in all questions of war, revenue, and diplomacy.

In the meantime the enemies of the late Governor-General were preparing an elaborate assault on his whole career, and in this work the generous humanitarian sympathies and lofty, though often misdirected, indignation of Burke were reinforced by the thwarted ambition and bitter enmity of Philip Francis. Hastings arrived in England in June 1785, and it seemed for a time as though the storm that threatened him would pass over. But in 1786 Burke, on an unwise challenge from Hastings's agent, moved in Parliament for papers dealing with various points in his administration. The attack, at first repelled, gathered in intensity and effectiveness. The House acquitted Hastings on the question of the wars against the Marathas and the Rohillas, but passed condemnatory resolutions on his dealings with Chait Singh and the Begams of Oudh. Pitt, who had hitherto supported Hastings, felt bound to vote against him on the two latter counts. An amazing amount of

misplaced ingenuity has been expended in the endeavour to find some motive more or less unworthy for this action. The simple truth appears to be that he and Dundas felt there was too much evidence, at least for a prima facie case, for them to hold out any longer; and it must be admitted that before the full defence was made, which could only be done at the trial, the facts at the very least called for criticism and an explanation. The following passage in the letter of Dundas to Cornwallis of March 21, 1787, should put this controversy finally to rest: 'The proceeding (i. e. the impeachment) is not pleasant to many of our friends; and of course from that and many other circumstances, not pleasing to us; but the truth is, when we examined the various articles of charges against him with his defences, they were so strong, and the defences so perfectly unsupported, it was impossible not to concur.'[1]

The trial began in Westminster Hall on February 13, 1788. The articles of impeachment as finally presented were twenty in number. Most of them dealt with Hastings's relations with Oudh. He was charged with the violation of treaties made with the Nawab, unnecessary interference in his internal affairs, compulsion put upon him to maintain an excessive number of troops, with oppression in the case of the Raja of Benares, with the arbitrary settlement of the land revenues of Bengal, the removal of the treasury from Murshidabad to Calcutta, with fraudulent dealings in contracts, and the acceptance of presents and bribes. The chief managers of the impeachment were Burke, Fox, and Sheridan, and they were helped and prompted throughout by Francis. Largely through interminable wrangling over the admissibility of evidence the trial was spun out to an inordinate length. As it dragged on its slow course the growing violence and irritability of Burke, whose mind became

[1] *Correspondence of . . . Marquess Cornwallis*, Charles Ross, vol. i, p. 281.

almost unbalanced by the strain, gradually alienated all popular sympathy from his cause. It was strongly felt that, whatever Hastings's faults and errors might have been, they were more than adequately requited by the long-drawn-out agony of the trial. In 1791 it was decided to drop all the articles of charge except those dealing with the case of Chait Singh and the Begams of Oudh, fraudulent contracts, presents and bribes. The verdict was only given in the eighth year of the impeachment, on April 23, 1795. Hastings was acquitted on all the articles. In the voting the highest minorities were recorded in the charges relating to the rulers of Benares and Oudh, which were defeated by majorities of 23 to 6.

The pity is that the matter ever went any further than the Parliamentary inquiry. Hastings's critics might well have been content with the censure then passed on these two points, the least defensible of his acts. Following the precedent created in Clive's case, the Commons should at the same time have carried a rider recognizing the exceptional difficulties under which the late Governor-General laboured, and recording a generous appreciation of his long and splendid services to Great Britain in the East. Thus the justice of the case would have been met and the procedure in Parliament might well have been supplemented in due time by the grant of some high honour from the Crown. Unfortunately this course was not followed, and year after year the unedifying spectacle was presented of Hastings, still patient, imperturbable, and courageous, standing at the bar of the Lords, a target for the terrible invectives launched against him by the three greatest orators of the day.

Yet perhaps we may say that the impeachment had its uses, for while it ended in the acquittal of the accused, it brought about the condemnation of the system under which he had been called upon to govern; and even if it revealed on his part some acts of impolitic and unjust severity and

some instances of lax financial control, it also made known, as perhaps nothing else could have done, his splendid administrative abilities, his cool and dauntless courage, his marvellous equanimity under cruel provocation, and, finally, his untiring efforts, at last crowned with success, to wrest victory from defeat, and, in a time of world-wide disaster elsewhere, to leave the British inheritance in the East in extent and resources not less than he found it.

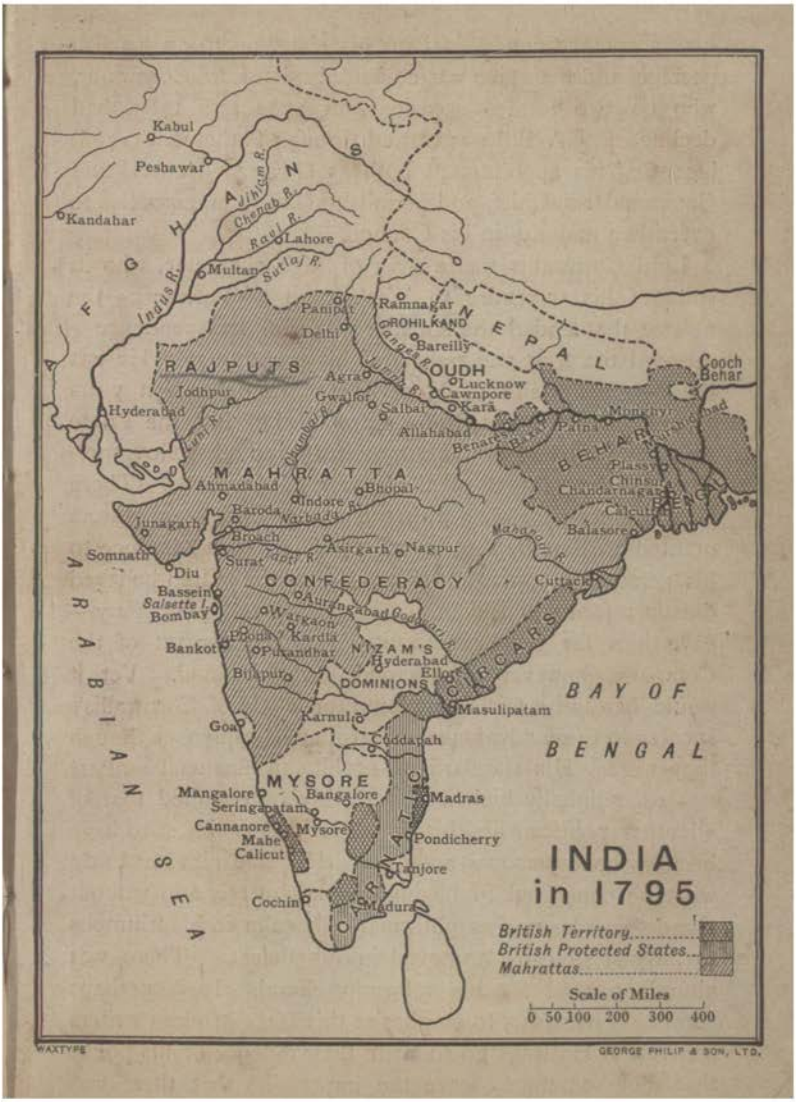
CHAPTER XIX

INTERNAL REFORMS. THE GREAT LAND SETTLEMENT. LORD CORNWALLIS AND SIR JOHN SHORE

When Hastings left India, John Macpherson, the senior member of Council, succeeded him as temporary Governor-General. He was not above the average type of the Company's servants in their worst epoch. Concerned in some discreditable intrigues with the Nawab of the Carnatic both before and after he had entered the Company's service, he had been cashiered by Lord Pigot but reinstated by the Court of Directors. During his year and a half of office he only succeeded in making some ill-advised overtures to the Maratha government at Poona which afterwards embarrassed his successor, and in carrying through some reductions in expenditure. His administration, though approved by the Court of Directors and rewarded with a baronetcy, was declared by Lord Cornwallis, a man not given to exaggeration, to be a 'system of the dirtiest jobbing'.[1]

The feeling was now widely prevalent in England that a Governor-General should be appointed who had not spent his official career in the corrupt atmosphere of the covenanted service. The choice of the Court fell first upon Lord Macartney, who, without having passed through the subordinate ranks of the Company's service, had enjoyed as Governor of Madras considerable Indian experience. He was, however, passed over when he made

[1] *Correspondence of Charles, first Marquess Cornwallis*, Charles Ross, 3 vols., 1859, vol. i, p. 371.



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his acceptance conditional on his elevation to an English peerage, and the office was conferred upon Lord Cornwallis, who on two former occasions, in 1782 and 1785, had declined it. A Bill was carried through Parliament (1786) legalizing his appointment both as Governor-General and Commander-in-Chief, and permitting him in emergencies to override a majority in his Council.

Lord Cornwallis was a man of high character, who in spite of his surrender to Washington at Yorktown—the reverse that ended the American War of Independence—retained the trust and respect of his countrymen. He was the personal friend of Henry Dundas, for sixteen years President of the Board of Control, and of Pitt, the Prime Minister, and had perhaps more than any other Governor-General the support of the Court of Directors. These circumstances, together with the extraordinary legal powers granted to him by the Act of 1786—a tribute at once to his personal integrity and a proof that the nation believed drastic reforms in Indian administration to be necessary—gave him far greater authority than any servant of the Company, however able, could have obtained. Yet it would hardly be fair to attribute the whole of Cornwallis's success to these advantages of position, conspicuous though they were. His standard of probity in financial matters was exceptionally high, and probably transcended that of all other politicians of his day. He seems almost to have been without personal ambition. His sole aim was to do what he conceived to be his duty adequately and without parade, and he was as phlegmatically calm in his triumphs as he was stoically unmoved in his defeats. There was abundant need for his reforming hand. It is perhaps somewhat necessary to emphasize this fact. Modern writers on Warren Hastings go so far in their defence of his policy that they sometimes leave the impression that there was nothing for Cornwallis to amend. But this was certainly

not the case. Hastings, as we have shown, cared little for money himself, and his faults where it was concerned were carelessness and extravagance rather than avarice, but he hardly seems to have been revolted by the vitiated atmosphere in which he moved, and he freely used means, which a later age and a higher standard can only regard as questionable, to bind men to his interests and win their support. Sir John Malcolm says with truth that 'his most strenuous advocates . . . while they defend his personal integrity, are forced to acknowledge, that the whole system of the government over which he presided was corrupt and full of abuses'.[1]

In his assault on this system Cornwallis was in great measure single-handed. It was hopeless to expect the Court of Directors to take any clear and consistent line on the question of financial reform. We are apt to regard the Directors in England and their servants in India as two distinct bodies with very divergent interests, but though this is true to a certain extent, in some respects they were wont to act rather in collusion than in opposition. The position of Director at this time was chiefly valued for the patronage in Indian appointments and the opportunities for securing lucrative contracts which it conferred. There are many indications of a questionable co-operation between the Company's servants abroad and their nominal masters at home. The payment to Clive of his huge *jagir* was readily acquiesced in by the Court till they began to quarrel with him on other grounds. Johnstone, member of the Bengal Council in 1765, and other delinquents who had received valuable presents against the direct prohibition of the Directors, had influence enough in Leadenhall Street to quash the suits that were instituted against them for restitution of their ill-gotten gains. The notorious Paul Benfield wielded such influence both in the Court of Directors

[1] *Sketch of the Political History of India*, John Malcolm, 1811, p. 40.

and in Parliament as to prevent for many years all inquiry into the scandal of the Nawab of Arcot's debts—debts of millions of pounds 'in favour', as Burke declared, 'of a set of men whose names with few exceptions are either buried in the obscurity of their origin and talents or dragged into light by the enormity of their crimes'.[1] In spite of characteristic exaggeration there is some truth in the same orator's paradox: 'The servants in India are not appointed by the Directors, but the Directors are chosen by them. The trade is carried on with their capitals. To them the revenues of the country are mortgaged. The seat of the supreme government is in Calcutta. The house in Leadenhall is nothing more than a 'change for their agents, factors, and deputies to meet in.'[2] How else but by the existence of collusion between the Directors and their servants in the East can we account for the fact that the Resident of Benares, one of the posts in the gift of the Governor-General, was allowed to make an annual income of £40,000 a year besides his official salary of £1,350? When Cornwallis had cleansed the Augean stables he wrote, 'the splendid and corrupting objects of Lucknow and Benares are removed; and here I must look back to the conduct of former Directors, who knew that these shocking evils existed, but instead of attempting to suppress them, were quarrelling whether their friends, or those of Mr. Hastings, should enjoy the plunder'.[3]

Such was the state of things with which Cornwallis had to deal. Nor must it be supposed that any mere extension of state control over the East India Company would necessarily have done away with the corrupt atmosphere. Parliamentary government at this time was still hopelessly venal. Cornwallis himself was pestered by men of high rank in

[1] Burke's *Speeches*, vol iii, p. 109.
[2] Idem, vol. ii, p. 473.
[3] *Correspondence of . . . Cornwallis*, Charles Ross, vol. i, p. 306.

England, including the Prince of Wales, to perpetrate 'some infamous and unjustifiable job',[1] and when the question of the renewal of the Company's charter came to the fore in 1793, he declared he feared the 'furious clamour' that would be raised against 'annexing the patronage of India to the influence of the Crown', and he still thought a Court of Directors, though its constitution might be improved, could 'prove a useful check on the ambitious or corrupt designs of some future minister'.[2]

In a history like the present it is impossible to deal adequately with the work of each Governor-General in every field; but it is important to gain a clear idea of each man's most characteristic contribution to the building up of British dominion in India. Few were destined to do more permanent work than Lord Cornwallis, especially in the department of internal affairs. Externally the interest of his rule is almost confined to his war with Tipu Sultan of Mysore, and his success there, though considerable, was not of the nature of a complete triumph. In internal affairs his governor-generalship is one of the most notable, and his achievements in order of importance are the reform of the covenanted service, the permanent settlement of the land revenues of Bengal, and the reorganization of the Bengal courts of law.

The emolument of Englishmen who spend the best part of their lives in the East has always been fixed on a higher scale than that of their fellow-countrymen in temperate climates. Modern practice, the outcome of much experience and many mistakes in the past, has solved the question by the payment of adequate salaries during the working period of the civil servant's career, and retirement with a generous pension at a comparatively early age. The plan adopted by the Court of Directors, which they only

[1] Idem, vol. ii, p. 51.
[2] *Marquess Cornwallis*, W. S. Seton-Karr, p. 76.

abandoned reluctantly at Cornwallis's earnest solicitation, was small nominal salaries with large commissions at a fixed rate on the collection of revenues. The meagreness of the salaries is often greatly exaggerated, and if they were too small, the commissions and perquisites were a great deal too large. The Resident at Benares at this time, as we have seen, had a salary of 1,000 rupees a month or, at the current value of the rupee, £1,350 a year, which would now be considered fair remuneration for the position; but he made besides in indirect ways the huge amount of £40,000 a year and, if we are to believe Cornwallis, other perquisites besides. The truth seems to be that, as there was no pension awaiting the Company's servant on his retirement, it was considered absolutely necessary that in fifteen to twenty years' service each man should have accumulated a fortune upon which to retire in comfort. At this period we find that the Company's servants in Bengal (1) received a fixed salary from the Court of Directors, (2) received also commissions on the revenues of Bengal, (3) engaged in the forbidden private trade. 'I am sorry to say', wrote Cornwallis, 'that I have every reason to believe that at present almost all the collectors are, under the name of some relation or friend, deeply engaged in commerce, and by their influence as collectors and judges of Adalat become the most dangerous enemies to the Company's interest.'[1] The reforms effected by Cornwallis were wide and sweeping. He proved the stern foe of every kind of job, sinecure, or dubious contract. For the vicious system of commissions he substituted generous salaries at a fixed amount, and he separated the executive and judicial powers of the Company's servants. He thus left the functions and position of the collector very much what we know them to be to-day.[2] The covenanted service of the

[1] *A Comprehensive History of India*, H. Beveridge, vol. ii, p. 575.

[2] It must be noted however that the absolute separation between executive and judicial powers has not been maintained. See *infra*, p. 289.

Company from that date assumed a new aspect, and grew by natural development into the imperial civil service of the Indian Empire.

In India the great bulk of public revenue has always been raised from the land. When the British in Bengal were granted the *diwani* in 1765, they found a system in vogue by which the 'ryot' or peasant cultivator paid a fixed share of the produce of his land either in cash or kind to the 'zamindars'. The 'zamindars' were at first mere collectors of the revenue. But the office gradually tended to become hereditary in the families of the original holders. Thus the 'zamindari', which was originally, as it has been described, an hereditary contract agency, became something resembling a landed estate. The zamindar received the territorial revenues of the state from the ryots and paid the Mughal sovereign or his Viceroy nine-tenths of what he received, retaining the remaining tenth for himself. He succeeded to his zamindari by inheritance, but was expected to pay a fine on his succession. He could sell or give away his office on obtaining permission, but if deprived of it by the state, he became entitled to compensation. Over the lands in his zamindari he had a right to regulate the incidence of the cesses (or taxes) imposed by the ruler of Bengal, and he was responsible for the keeping of the peace within his jurisdiction. On the acquisition of the *diwani* in 1765 the collection of the revenue was left in the hands of natives, though in 1769 with dubious success British 'supervisors' were appointed to control them.

In 1772, as we have seen, Hastings, on taking over the management of the *diwani* from Indian agents, leased the right to collect the revenues to the highest bidders for five years. This quinquennial settlement however proved a failure. The farmers of the revenue offered more than they could pay, and at the end of the period they were

2½ millions in arrears. Hastings, following instructions from home, returned to the system of annual leases. This precarious tenure by universal consent was a mistake. The flow of capital to the land was checked. The revenue steadily diminished. Cornwallis reported that on his arrival in India he found agriculture and trade decaying, ryots and zamindars sinking into poverty, and money-lenders the only flourishing class in the community. The annual tenure was not regarded favourably by the British Parliament of landlords, who looked upon the zamindars as landholders in the ordinary sense of the word. An Act of Parliament was passed in 1784 directing the Court of Directors to abandon the annual system and frame 'permanent rules' for the raising of the land revenues.

Nearly two years later the Court of Directors tardily urged Cornwallis to make a ten-years' settlement with the zamindars, which was eventually to be declared permanent, if it proved satisfactory. From that date, 1786, to 1789 Cornwallis with the aid of John Shore, a Bengal civilian whose knowledge of land tenures was wide and profound, studied the question, and in 1789 a settlement for ten years was made. In 1793 Cornwallis urged upon Dundas, against the advice of Shore, that the existing settlement should be made permanent. Dundas eagerly welcomed the suggestion, and shut himself up for ten days at Wimbledon with Pitt, the Prime Minister, that they might study the question without interruption. At the end of that time they decided for Cornwallis against Shore, and on March 22, 1793, the settlement was fixed in perpetuity.

Upon this famous Permanent Settlement historians have passed diametrically opposite judgements. 'It was', says Marshman, 'a bold, brave, and wise measure. Under the genial influence of this territorial charter, which for the first time created indefeasible rights and interests in the soil, population has increased, cultivation has been extended, and

a gradual improvement has become visible in the habits and comfort of the people.'[1] On the other hand, Holmes says: 'The Permanent Settlement was a sad blunder . . . The inferior tenants derived from it no benefit whatever. The zamindars again and again failed to pay their rent charges, and their estates were sold for the benefit of the government.'[2]

The views quoted are typical of two opposing schools, and are not so irreconcilable as may at first sight appear. The Permanent Settlement, in contrast to the chaotic system which it supplanted, had many fairly obvious advantages. It ultimately improved the position of the zamindar, who was secured in his zamindari as long as he paid the state revenues. He henceforth appropriated to his own benefit the difference between the rents he received from the ryots and the claim of the state. He had no longer to pay fines on succession or obtain permission before effecting a sale, and he was relieved from the burden of maintaining order in his district. The Permanent Settlement gave popularity and stability to the British government, and has helped to make the province the wealthiest and most flourishing in India. It has avoided the evils of periodical assessments which, at however long intervals, produce economic dislocation, evasion, the concealment of wealth, and the deliberate throwing of land out of cultivation. Even though the state sacrificed much future revenue, it gained indirectly through the general increase in prosperity and the abolition of those checks to industry and improvements which must always appear when the government bears away part of the profit.

On the other hand, the immediate effect, even upon the zamindars, was disastrous. Many of them, being unable to recover the rent from the cultivators, could not pay the

[1] *The History of India*, J. C. Marshman (1871), vol. ii, p. 35.
[2] *History of the Indian Mutiny*, T. R. E. Holmes, p. 12.

state dues and were forced to part with their ancient rights to new proprietors. To such of them as were able to withstand the first strain and to the new owners of zamindaris the Permanent Settlement ultimately gave an enormous increase in rent at the expense of the state and the ryots, while the hope that they would invest much capital in improving and developing their 'estates' was doomed to disappointment. The amount to be paid by the zamindars was fixed at three and three-quarter millions sterling, while the rents received by them now exceed thirteen millions. The state once and for all parted with the power to divert a portion of this unearned increment, and the rest of India has to be taxed more heavily that Bengal landlords may enjoy a position of especial emolument. Though Cornwallis endeavoured to some extent to mitigate, in the interests of the ryots, the hardships of an economic rent, it cannot be said that he was very successful. Their status was undoubtedly impaired, and it was not until 1859 that the Bengal Land Act afforded them real relief. This feature of the Permanent Settlement is its greatest blot in the eyes of those who regard the zamindar as originally the headman of the free village, representing the cultivators and nominated by the government to collect and pay over the state revenues. According to this view, though he tended as time went on to be looked upon as the landlord of his zamindari, the peasants who paid the dues 'were neither his tenants nor his vassals. . . . A very great blunder as well as gross injustice was committed when a settlement was made with zamindars alone, and rights of property every whit as good as theirs were completely ignored.'[1]

Summing up therefore, it may be said that most of the advantages of the Permanent Settlement might equally well have been obtained by a settlement for a long term of years. The state would not then have parted for ever [illegible] power

[1] *A Comprehensive History of India*, H. Beveridge, vol. ii. 641.

to derive an increased revenue from the unearned increment of the land. 'The land revenue', throughout the Permanent Settlement area, says Mr. E. D. Maclagan, 'has now, like the English land tax, none of the characteristics of taxation, and may be said to be at the present day nothing more than a rent charge, the burden of which has long ago been discounted by the reduced selling price of the land which it affects.'[1] Had the Permanent Settlement but been postponed for another ten or twenty years, the capacities of the land would have been better ascertained. Many mistakes and anomalies would have been avoided, and the reforms brought about by Cornwallis himself in the civil service would have trained up a class of officials far more competent to deal with so vast and intricate a subject. P. M.

In the organization of the judicial courts, civil and criminal, Cornwallis completed the work begun by Warren Hastings. Briefly to summarize a very technical and difficult subject, he vested the collection of the revenues and the administration of justice in separate officers, though this principle was afterwards departed from in the governor-generalship of Lord Hastings. An ascending hierarchy of civil courts was established, consisting of (1) small courts for the recovery of petty debts, presided over by native commissioners; (2) *Zillah*, or District, and City Courts under a British judge with native assessors; (3) four Provincial Courts, each under three European judges, also with native assessors; (4) the Court of Appeal, or *Sadr Diwani Adalat*, consisting of the Governor-General and members of Council in Calcutta. A parallel organization of criminal courts was set up—the judges being practically the same and those of the provincial civil courts going on circuit—surmounted by the Court of Appeal, the *Sadr Nizamat Adalat*. The criminal jurisdiction of the native Deputy Nawab, or Naib Nazim, was thus finally abolished, and an elaborate new

[1] *The Imperial Gazetteer of India*, vol. iv, p. 229.

Code of Regulations, drawn up by George Barlow, was printed and published to guide the officials of the new judicial system.

In these three fields, then, the status of the covenanted civil service, the collection of the land revenues, and the organization of the judicature, lay the real and important work of Cornwallis. 'He gathered up the scattered fragments of government which he found and reduced them to one comprehensive system. He gave substance and permanency to what had before been light and transient. He laid the foundation of the present Indian constitution.'

In his foreign policy Cornwallis was anxious above all to maintain the neutrality and peace which was consonant with the declaration of Parliament made in Pitt's Act of 1784 and repeated in 1793, that 'to pursue schemes of conquest and extension of dominion in India are measures repugnant to the wish, the honour, and policy of this nation'.

He refused in 1788 to assist the son of Shah Alam, then residing at Benares, to recover his throne at Delhi, and he succeeded with some adroitness in extricating himself from the agreement which Macpherson had injudiciously made with the Peshwa—'a very awkward, foolish scrape',[1] but he was not able to avoid hostilities with the ruler of Mysore, the most formidable and relentless of the Company's adversaries. The path of the Governor-General was entangled with former ill-advised treaties made by the muddle-headed governments of Madras, and by the habitual treachery of the native powers. A very involved story must here be briefly told. The Nizam of Hyderabad, always the ally and generally the embarrassment of the Company, appealing to the Treaty of Masulipatam (1768), called for the aid of British troops to recover certain of his former territories from Tipu, while at the same time, as was afterwards discovered, he

[1] *Correspondence of . . . Marquess Cornwallis*, Charles Ross, vol. i, p. 219.

intrigued with the latter for a coalition against the English. When Lord Cornwallis looked into the diplomatic history of the point, he discovered that in 1769 a treaty had been made with Haider Ali explicitly recognizing his claims to the territories of which the Treaty of Masulipatam professed to deprive him. Further, the treaty of 1784, concluded with Tipu himself, also acknowledged these rights. On the other hand, it was clear that Tipu was meditating war against the Company's dominions, and Cornwallis was anxious before embarking on it to secure the alliance of the Nizam, but a clause in Pitt's Act of 1784 prevented the Governor-General without the consent of the home authorities from declaring war on native princes or entering into a treaty with that object, unless previously attacked. Cornwallis, by a rather desperate piece of casuistry, determined to accept the Nizam's appeal to the treaty of 1768, though his action in doing so violated the two subsequent treaties of 1769 and 1784. He adopted the extraordinary expedient of writing a letter to the Nizam, explanatory of the treaty of 1768, which declared that, if the districts claimed by the Nizam should ever come into the possession of the British, they should be handed over to him; troops were to be supplied to the Nizam but were not to be employed against any powers in alliance with the British; a list of these powers was added and the name of Tipu was deliberately excluded. The war with Mysore was in all probability, as Cornwallis said, 'an absolute and cruel necessity', but that so naturally open and frank a man should be driven to such expedients to range the Nizam on his side, illustrates the difficulties of the neutral course imposed by resolutions of Parliament and the precepts of the Court of Directors upon the Indian government, and, it must be confessed, lent some support to those who argued that Tipu was almost forced henceforward to take up arms in self-defence. Little wonder that even the peace-loving Cornwallis spoke feelingly of the 'unavoid-

able inconvenience of our being constantly exposed to the necessity of commencing a war, without having previously secured the assistance of efficient allies'.[1]

Tipu himself forced on the war. In 1787 he had sent envoys as far as Constantinople and Paris to seek allies against the British, and he was buoyed up by many deluding hopes. In December 1789 he attacked Travancore, a small state in the extreme south-west of the Peninsula, whose Raja was an ally of the Company, and in the following year he devastated the country with his usual wantonness and cruelty. Cornwallis succeeded in forming a triple league against him by agreements with the Peshwa and the Nizam in June and July 1790, each of whom was to provide a contingent of troops and share in the profits of the conquest. Both were unwilling allies and rendered no useful aid, but at least they were prevented from joining Mysore.

The campaign of 1790 conducted by General Medows was unsatisfactory. Accordingly in December 1790 the Governor-General himself assumed the command, captured Bangalore in March of the following year, and advanced on the capital, Seringapatam; but though he defeated Tipu in a pitched battle in May, he was forced through a shortage of supplies to spike his heavy guns and retreat. The third campaign in the late summer of 1791 was more successful. Tipu's mountain fastnesses were reduced, and in January 1792 a second advance was made with an imposing force on Seringapatam, and the outworks of the town were captured. Tipu then made his submission, which was accepted by the Governor-General. Some critics have supposed that Cornwallis had it then in his power to complete the work which he left to Wellesley, but there were many good reasons for stopping short of the storm of Seringapatam. Sickness was spreading in the British camps; treachery, and with good reason, was suspected in the Nizam and the Marathas. War

[1] *A Comprehensive History of India*, H. Beveridge, vol. ii, p. 582.

with France was evidently imminent, and the Directors were clamouring for peace. Further, the Governor-General was not eager to take over the management of the whole country of Mysore, and so deliberately stayed his hand. By the treaty of March 1792, Tipu was forced to cede half his dominions, pay an indemnity of more than £3,000,000, and surrender two of his sons as hostages.

The war brought the Company their first really important accession of territory since 1765. On the west of Mysore they obtained Malabar and the sovereignty over Coorg, whose Raja had supported their cause; on the south, Dindigul with the surrounding districts; on the east, the Baramahal and the command of the famous passes through which Haider Ali used to make his devastating incursions. The general result was that the British had cut off the Sultan of Mysore from approach to the sea on the west, and commanded the defiles giving access to the table-land of his country. The Marathas gained territory on the north-west and the Nizam on the north-east of Mysore. Each of the confederates got one-third of the indemnity. Cornwallis summed up the results of the war by saying, 'We have effectually crippled our enemy, without making our friends too formidable'.[1]

There was a pause for the moment, but the omens were not favourable for a lasting peace. Tipu was humiliated and cowed, but in his diminished kingdom he nursed an implacable resentment against the power that had vanquished him, and he had already begun to meditate busy intrigues with the French, the Amir of Afghanistan, and the native states of southern India. The Peshwa and the Nizam eyed each other jealously, and even during the campaign the Marathas were only kept from falling on the plains of Mysore by their fear of the British forces. In the meantime, while Corn-

[1] *Correspondence of . . . Marquess Cornwallis*, Charles Ross, vol. ii, p. 154.

wallis allied with the Peshwa was defeating Tipu, Sindhia and Holkar, the nominal generals of the Maratha confederacy, were fighting one another in northern India—a rivalry presaging trouble for the head of the nation at Poona and for the tranquillity of all India.

Still, on the whole, Cornwallis, now created a marquis, could leave India in October 1793 with the feeling that no immediate disturbance was imminent. Just before his departure, on the declaration of the Revolutionary war with France, the helpless French possessions were occupied by British troops.

The retirement of Cornwallis coincided with the renewal of the Company's charter in 1793. Had the period of their privileges chanced to lapse ten years earlier, it is likely that popular feeling would have gone hard against any extension of the monopoly. But the reforms of Cornwallis enabled a highly favourable balance-sheet to be set forth. The great seaports and manufacturing towns, Liverpool, Bristol, Glasgow, Manchester, Norwich, Paisley, and Exeter, petitioned against the exclusion of the country in general from a share in the Indian trade, and the whole question of Free Trade or Restriction was raised; but ministers supported the Directors, and the Company's privileges were extended for another twenty-four years, with the small concession that 3,000 tons of shipping should be provided annually for the use of private shippers. One of the main arguments of Dundas was that, if the trade to India were thrown open, the colonization of the country would follow, and India be lost to Great Britian.

Lord Cornwallis had once expressed a hope that he would never again see the supreme government in the hands of a Company's servant. He was, however, himself succeeded by such a one, Sir John Shore, his colleague and adviser in forming the land settlement in Bengal. The appointment was due to the failure to find in England what King

George III described as 'a very proper man of distinction'—a failure that caused Dundas, the famous President of the Board of Control, to entertain for a time the idea of himself proceeding to India. Since the governor-generalship of Cornwallis, only three of the Company's servants were promoted to the highest place, namely Sir John Shore, Sir George Barlow, and Sir John Lawrence, and in each case, it is interesting to note, their period of office was marked by a policy of peace and non-interference.

Certainly in the administration of Sir John Shore the neutral policy laid down by Parliament and the Court of Directors received a fair trial. The Indian government showed its genuine desire to allow the native powers to manage their own affairs. British dominion remained stationary, and Sir John Shore preserved neutrality even up to a pitch which, in the opinion of some, jeopardized the national honour of Great Britain. 'It was proved', wrote Sir John Malcolm, 'from the events of this administration, that no ground of political advantage could be abandoned, without being instantly occupied by an enemy; and that to resign influence, was not merely to resign power, but to allow that power to pass into hands hostile to the British government.'[1] Shore's period of office proved the lull before the storm. For five years a precarious peace was preserved, while the ominous clouds were gathering that resulted in the wars and annexations of Lord Wellesley. When the time for British interference came, it was all the more drastic for having been so long delayed.

The two native powers that most gladly submitted to British protection, the Muhammadan governments of Oudh and Hyderabad, were willing to do so because of their very weakness. The Company's alliance with them, especially with the Nizam, by the mere logic of events was destined

[1] *Sketch of the Political History of India*, John Malcolm, 1811, p. 225.

to carry the British far on the way to dominion in India; but at present the government hardly realized the lengths to which such engagements would lead them, and, in so far as they did realize them, shrank from the responsibilities involved. At the end of the Mysorean war, Cornwallis tried to persuade the Marathas and the Nizam to enter upon a mutual guarantee to protect each other's territories against Tipu Sultan. The Nizam, as the weaker party, had been willing to accede to this request, but the Marathas had refused, with the intention, no doubt, of making the Nizam their prey in the future as they had so frequently done in the past. The Nizam then endeavoured to obtain such a guarantee from the East India Company, but Cornwallis hesitated to give him more than a vague assurance of support. Sir John Shore firmly refused to do more than his predecessor, and the Nizam therefore turned to other aid. He employed a distinguished French officer, Raymond, to train his troops and recruit battalions of Frenchmen.

In the meantime the Maratha states were making their plans for the plunder of Hyderabad. Something must be said here of the power of their confederacy. A glance at the map will show the dominating position they held in central India. The territories of the Peshwa formed a broad belt of country, running down the western shore of the Deccan between the Nizam's dominions and the sea to the northern frontier of Mysore. The boundaries between the districts controlled by the Gaikwar, Holkar, and Sindhia were very wavering and ill defined, but roughly we may say that the Gaikwar held Kathiawar and Gujarat; Holkar, the south-western part of Malwa; Sindhia, north-eastern Malwa, the territory west of the Jumna, and the upper Ganges and Jumna Doab. The lands of the Raja of Berar extended in a broad belt from his capital, Nagpur, to the sea at Cuttack on the Bay of Bengal. Thus the Marathas commanded the wide centre of the peninsula, and stretched from Gujarat in

the west to Orissa in the east, their territory reaching up northwards to the confines of the Punjab, and on its southern frontiers enveloping on three sides the dominions of the Nizam.

The constitutional position of the Maratha confederacy at this time forms a curious and baffling political puzzle, but for the understanding of what follows it is essential that an outline of the main features should be grasped. The nominal head of the whole, the descendant of Sivaji, still dwelt in his palace prison at Satara in the original Maharashtra. All real power in western India had long passed to the Peshwa (Prime Minister) at Poona, but he too had now become almost a *roi fainéant* in the hands of his minister, the able Nana Farnavis. The nominally subordinate members of the confederacy had in the meantime passed beyond the control of Poona in all but name. The Bhonsla Raja of Berar claiming kinship with Sivaji, Holkar of Indore, and Sindhia of Gwalior, hereditary generals of the Peshwa, who were originally given their lands as a reward for military service, and the Gaikwar of Baroda, were all practically independent princes. Between Sindhia and Holkar there was a family feud. The Raja of Berar was rather isolated by position from Poona intrigues, and the Gaikwar alone of Maratha powers never challenged British suzerainty, but maintained treaty relations of some kind or another from the date of Warren Hastings's Maratha war.

The greatest Maratha chieftain, in personal ability and in extent of his dominions, was Mahadji Sindhia, who since 1784 controlled Hindustan from the Sutlaj to Agra, held valuable territories in Malwa and the Deccan, and possessed a fine army disciplined and recruited by De Boigne, a brilliant Savoyard soldier of fortune. The old Emperor Shah Alam had been forced to put himself under Sindhia's protection, and, at the peremptory request of his protector, had issued patents appointing the Peshwa supreme Vicegerent

of the Empire, and Sindhia himself the Peshwa's Deputy. So by an extraordinary series of political fictions and a curious turn of the political wheel, the Mughal emperor had now passed under the control of a general of the Hindu confederacy, which was swayed by the minister of the Peshwa—himself the Mayor of the Palace of the Raja of Satara, whose claims were historically based upon a rebellion against Mughal sovereignty. It is true that Sindhia for a time suffered vicissitudes of fortune. He was defeated by a Rajput coalition in 1786, and in 1788 he temporarily lost his hold on Delhi, when a savage Rohilla chief imprisoned and blinded the miserable Shah Alam. But by 1792 he had recovered his position, had rescued and restored the emperor, and again stood forth, in Sir John Malcolm's striking words, 'the nominal slave, but the rigid master of Shah Alam, Emperor of Delhi; the pretended friend but the designing rival of the house of Holkar . . . the oppressor of the Rajput princes . . . and the proclaimed soldier but the actual plunderer of the family of the Peshwa'.[1] In 1792 he obtained new patents from the emperor, making the titles Vicegerent and Deputy hereditary and perpetual. With these he marched to Poona and held a solemn investiture. He persuaded the Peshwa that a serious mistake had been made in the late war in supporting the British power against Mysore, and urged a closer connexion with Tipu. Before any definite action could be taken, Mahadji Sindhia died suddenly in 1794; his successor, Daulat Rao Sindhia, was a youth in his teens, and for a time the control of Maratha affairs passed again into the hands of Nana Farnavis. There was, however, no change in the hostility displayed to the Nizam, who appealed to Sir John Shore for support. The Governor-General, dreading to be dragged into a war with the whole Maratha confederacy,

[1] Quoted by H. Beveridge in his *Comprehensive History of India*, vol. ii, p. 661.

refused to intervene, though the Nizam was undoubtedly as much an ally of the Company as the Raja of Travancore had been in 1790. This policy has been universally condemned as a slavish observance of neutrality. British good faith was tarnished in the eyes of native powers. In fact, had it not been for the 'incapacity of Indians for acting together' which has so often saved the British position in India, serious consequences might have been the result of Sir John Shore's timidity. The Nizam was defeated at Kharda (Kardla) in March 1795—the last occasion, as Marshman notes, when all the Maratha powers mustered together—and forced to submit to humiliating terms. But dissensions broke out at Poona on a change in succession to the Peshwaship, and there ensued such a tangled skein of treachery and intrigue as to be almost unparalleled even in eastern history. As a result, the Marathas forfeited in great measure the prizes of their victory. Nana Farnavis, to gain the Nizam's support against the opposite party, surrendered most of the advantages gained at Kharda.

In northern India, Shore acted with more vigour than he had done in the south. The Nawab of Oudh died in 1797, and was succeeded by a reputed son of ignoble birth and utterly worthless character. The Governor-General interposed, and raised the brother of the late Nawab to the throne, taking the opportunity to conclude a treaty with him which made the Company responsible for the whole defence of Oudh, in return for an annual subsidy of seventy-six lakhs of rupees, and the cession of the fort of Allahabad; he also bound the Nawab to hold no communications with any foreign state. The motive impelling Sir John Shore to this unwonted attitude was probably the recent presence at Lahore (1796) of the last of the invaders of India from the north-west, Zeman Shah of Kabul, who aroused for a moment in Hindustan hopes and fears that he would repeat the career of his grandfather, Ahmad Shah Durrani. But he

was recalled to deal with troubles in Afghanistan. The days of invasions by Asiatic conquerors from the mountains of the north-west were over.

Sir John Shore's integrity was undoubted, but the serious mutiny of the Bengal officers at the end of his governor-generalship went far to prove the wisdom of Cornwallis's warning, 'Such is the present temper of the British part of the community in India . . . that nobody but a person who has never been in the service can be competent to govern our possessions with that energy and vigour which is essential to our political safety and internal prosperity.' The mutiny was due to dissatisfaction with the economical reforms of Cornwallis and jealousy between the King's and the Company's services, and so threatening was the position that the Governor-General was driven to make many concessions to the disaffected. He was thereupon superseded and after Dundas had again dallied with the idea of going to India, Cornwallis was appointed Governor-General in February 1797. But so many points were yielded to the mutineers even by the Court of Directors that Cornwallis resigned office before leaving England, and Shore, who was created Lord Teignmouth on his retirement, was succeeded in 1798 by the Earl of Mornington.

CHAPTER XX

EXPANSION. LORD WELLESLEY. SUBSIDIARY ALLIANCES AND ANNEXATIONS

RICHARD COLLEY WELLESLEY, Earl of Mornington (in the peerage of Ireland), had held office as a Lord of the Treasury and Commissioner of the Board of Control. He was in the prime of life, thirty-seven years of age, a great classical scholar, a master of stately if rather grandiloquent English, of brilliant and ardent temperament, and endowed with greater genius though less solidity of character than his more famous younger brother. He was one of the greatest of British rulers of India. Only Clive, Warren Hastings, and Dalhousie can challenge comparison with him, and in actual achievement he outdistanced them all. He came to India at an auspicious time for one who wished to play a great part, when the policy of non-interference and neutrality was on the point of breaking down, and he seized the tide of his opportunity at the flood. He had great chances and made the most of them—brilliant military commanders, governors of the subordinate Presidencies who did not dream of opposition, and, for the first few years at any rate, the active sympathy of Dundas and Pitt. But above all his own imperious will, wide and bold political grasp of facts, and gorgeous imagination swept onward to a more ambitious view of British Dominion than had hitherto been entertained. It was afterwards realized that the change he inaugurated was in any case inevitable. But while others shrank from it even when they saw it coming, Wellesley went boldly forth to anticipate and to meet it.

He saw that Great Britain could no longer play any but the predominant part in India. A balance of power among the native states was impossible, however conscientiously the East India Company might strive to support it. When the armies of the Nizam and the Peshwa fought at Kharda, British representatives were with the sovereigns in either camp, and all the efforts of Sir John Shore were directed to isolating the conflict and preserving a benevolent neutrality. To Wellesley such an attitude was impossible, and in seven years' time he wrought a marvellous transformation; he crushed the power of Mysore, extended British control, protective but dictatorial, over the great Muhammadan states of Hyderabad and Oudh, took over the administration of Tanjore, Surat, and the Carnatic—that running sore of administration—struck boldly at the seat of Maratha power, left the Peshwa a mere dependent on British support, robbed Sindhia of Delhi and his royal prisoner, and was only prevented from anticipating the work of one of his successors, Lord Hastings, by the fact that his generals for the first time blundered in their tactics, and that his brilliant but somewhat breathless progress had long alienated the panic-stricken Court of Directors, and was now beginning to alarm even the ministers of the Crown.

Wellesley's first problem was Mysore. In his search for allies against the power that had humiliated him, Tipu had sent his emissaries to Arabia, Kabul, Constantinople, and Mauritius. The Governor of the Isles of France incautiously blazoned abroad the alliance between the French Republic and the tyrant of Mysore. Tipu with his own hand planted the tree of Liberty at Seringapatam—never surely before or since planted in such uncongenial soil—and was elected a member of a Jacobin Club. A few French troops (under a hundred in number) landed on the west coast of southern India at Mangalore almost at the same time as Lord Mornington stepped ashore at Madras. Th[illegible]

promptly determined on war. He would have launched against Mysore a military expedition at once, but he found the unprepared state of the military forces at Madras rendered this impossible, and altered his method though not his intention. He postponed operations for a year and made preparations with characteristic thoroughness. He endeavoured to revive the tripartite treaty of 1790 with the Nizam and the Marathas. The influence of Sindhia and the distracted state of the Maratha confederacy kept the Peshwa aloof, but he bound the ruler of Hyderabad to the British cause by the first of his famous 'subsidiary' alliances, September 1, 1798, that is, an alliance which implied the subordination of the allied Prince to the British government in external policy and foreign relations, the maintenance and payment of a contingent of the Company's troops, and the expulsion of the officers of other European nations. The Madras government with characteristic timidity opposed this measure, but Lord Mornington bore down their feeble opposition. This disbandment of the Nizam's formidable French force was carried out with great coolness and adroitness by Malcolm and Kirkpatrick, and an intercepted letter from Bonaparte at Cairo proved, at least to Wellesley, that action had not been taken a moment too soon. The Governor-General demanded absolute submission from Tipu, and, sweeping aside the latter's temporizing letters as insolent evasions, set his forces in motion. Simultaneously the main army under General Harris and the Nizam's contingent controlled by Arthur Wellesley, the Governor-General's younger brother, afterwards Duke of Wellington, invaded Mysore from the east, while a Bombay force made its way through the Western Ghats. Tipu was first defeated by the western invading force, then routed at Malavalli by Harris, and driven within the walls of his capital, Seringapatam. The city was carried by assault on May 4, 1799, after Tipu had refused to accept

the hard terms of giving up £2,000,000 and half his remaining lands. The Sultan himself was killed in the breach. Mornington's success was greater than he had expected. He thought to have crippled Tipu permanently, not to have had his kingdom at disposal. He annexed to the Company's dominions large and important territories: Kanara on the west, Coimbatore on the south, and some districts on the east, together with the fortress of Seringapatam. The general result was that Mysore was surrounded on all sides except the north by the British frontier, and the Company held now continuous territory in the south from the coast of Coromandel to Malabar. To the Nizam were assigned certain lands on the north-east, while to the Peshwa, who may be said at least to have observed neutrality, some districts were offered on certain conditions, which he refused. Upon this they were divided between the Nizam and the East India Company. A child of the Hindu royal family dispossessed by Haider Ali was raised to the throne of Mysore, which, in spite of its diminished territories, was larger than the hereditary dominions of his house before the annexations of the last two Muhammadan usurpers. Tipu's sons were provided for with 'disproportionate magnificence'. The conquest was loudly acclaimed in England. General Harris was raised to the Baronage and the Governor-General was made Marquis Wellesley in the peerage of Ireland—an honour which he considered inadequate and describes bitterly as a 'double-gilt potato'. Sir Arthur Wellesley succinctly thus summed up the first year's work of the Governor-General: 'Our principal ally the Nizam was restored to us, the French state growing in the peninsula of India was destroyed, our formidable native enemy Tipu, the certain ally of the French in India, was subdued . . .'[1]

The history of the first and second wars with Mysore

[1] *A Selection from the Wellington Dispatches*, S. J. Owen, p. 10.

throws into relief the greatness of Wellesley's achievement. The ruler who had defied the arms of Hastings and prolonged the war of Cornwallis to three campaigns was vanquished in two months. Tipu was a savage and cruel despot, but his implacable enmity to the British claims the respect due to consistency. He, like his father, understood that Great Britain rather than any native power was the enemy, and he never leagued himself with her against his neighbours. It must be admitted that Wellesley, when he had once obtained incriminating evidence against Tipu, gave him little opportunity to recant or explain, but ruthlessly swept aside his letters as evasive and unsatisfactory. The allies Tipu sent so far to seek failed him in the hour of need, and he had to face unaided the whirlwind he had raised. Had the Maratha chieftains, sinking their internal differences, possessed his singleness of purpose and all-consuming hate, the final advance of British supremacy might have been long delayed.

Elsewhere Lord Wellesley extended the Company's sway by more peaceful means in accordance with the principle that he boldly enunciated a few years later: 'The Company with relation to its territory in India must be viewed in the capacity of a sovereign power.' In October 1799 he made a subsidiary treaty with the Raja of Tanjore, who practically resigned the whole administration in return for an annuity of £40,000. He took advantage of a change of succession at Surat to abolish the double government, pension off the Nawab, and assume supreme control. He then applied the same policy in more important fields. The government of the Carnatic had long been an open scandal. The dual control had debased the Nawab, ruined his people, and so corrupted the settlement of Madras that the civil servants of that Presidency possessed the worst reputation of all the Company's representatives. By a treaty made with Cornwallis the Governor-General had been empowered to assume

the whole administration in time of war. This Wellesley had refrained from doing, but at the capture of Seringapatam he found evidence that the Nawab and his son had entered into some sort of correspondence with Tipu. This evidence, it must be confessed, was not very conclusive or convincing, but the evils of the Nawab's government were undeniable, and it afforded Wellesley the pretext he desired. On the death in July 1801 of the Nawab (son of that Muhammad Ali to establish whom so much British and French blood had been shed in the wars of 1746–63), Wellesley used this evidence to assume the whole civil and military government of the Carnatic, 'perhaps', as he himself declared, 'the most salutary and useful measure which has been adopted since the acquisition of the *diwani* of Bengal'. One-fifth of the revenue was paid to the new Nawab, who was allowed to retain the title.

Wellesley next turned his attention to his northern frontier. He held that the buffer-state of Oudh formed but a weak defence on the north-western boundary of Bengal, and he called upon the Nawab to disband a portion of his own ineffective army and receive a larger subsidiary force. The Nawab resisted till, wearied by the importunity of the British Resident, he expressed a wish to abdicate. Wellesley eagerly welcomed such a solution, and declared that the Nawab's intention could 'not be too much encouraged'.

But the proposal had not been seriously meant, and in any case the Nawab had only contemplated it on condition that his son should succeed him; when he found that Wellesley objected to this stipulation, he withdrew his offer. Wellesley's indignation knew no bounds, and, expressing himself 'extremely disgusted at the duplicity and insincerity of his conduct', he presented the Nawab with a draft treaty, which greatly increased the number of the subsidiary force and raised the subsidy payable to one and a quarter million sterling. The Nawab's protest, which

showed some ability and appealed effectively to former treaties, was arbitrarily ignored by the Governor-General as containing 'unfounded calumnies and gross misrepresentations both of facts and arguments'. The Nawab submissively gave way. But new demands were made upon him. Wellesley had lately developed his favourite instrument of the subsidiary treaty in a new direction. By a revised agreement in 1800 the Nizam of Hyderabad, instead of guaranteeing an annual subsidy, handed over for the upkeep of the subsidiary force the territory acquired in the Mysorean wars of 1792 and 1799 (which brought the British frontier to the river Kistna), and was formally granted protection against all external enemies. Wellesley determined to adopt the same expedient in the case of Oudh, and though the Nawab had not failed with his subsidy, he demanded and extorted the surrender of Rohilkhand and the northern districts between the Ganges and Jumna, amounting roughly to one-half of his dominions. The settlement of the ceded districts was handed over to a commission presided over by Henry Wellesley, the Governor-General's brother. Thus trenchantly Lord Wellesley dealt with what he called 'the corruption, imbecility, and abuse of that vicious and incorrigible system of vexation and misrule'—the government of Oudh. Whatever may be thought of the means employed, the practical results were all-important. Oudh was now surrounded by a belt of British territory which abutted on the Himalayas and marched with the ill-defined frontiers of Sindhia's dominions in northern India.

Naturally the voice of criticism was raised on many of these transactions. The conduct of the Governor-General was sufficiently high-handed, especially in his dealings with the Nawabs of Surat and Oudh. An effective case was made out against him in the polemics of the day, and on paper it was sometimes unanswerable. In fact, no one

who studies impartially the records of this period can deny that Wellesley was impatient of opposition, too regardless of the feelings of native rulers, often unjustified in the interpretation he chose to put upon treaties, and somewhat unscrupulous in the diplomatic pressure he exerted against those who dared to resist his designs. Even a favourable critic, for instance, has to admit that in the case of Oudh he 'subordinated the feelings and interests of his ally to paramount considerations of British policy in a manner that showed very little patience, forbearance, or generosity'.[1] His course has been justified on the ground merely of political exigency, and the measure of his success in extending the bounds of British dominion has been held a sufficient defence of the means he employed. But the political justification was assuredly not the only one. The sweeping and somewhat ruthless changes he made in the political map of India did undoubtedly on the whole make not only for the stability of British rule but for the amelioration of the lot of millions; there is apparent through all the Governor-General's speeches and dispatches a burning indignation at the wrongs and miseries inflicted by incompetent native governments on their hapless subjects, and a determination to wage a relentless war against the forces of anarchy and misrule. On that broad and general plea it is perhaps necessary, and it is certainly prudent, to rest Lord Wellesley's case, though to do so is frankly to abandon the outposts of a technical and legal defence.

As at this time most of the energies of the government at home were bent on combating the insatiable ambition of Bonaparte in the Revolutionary war with France, so Wellesley shared their cares in his distant outpost of empire, and his survey ranged even beyond the wide limits of his immediate charge. He has indeed been accused of exaggerating the French peril, partly because he counteracted it so thoroughly

[1] *British Dominion in India*, Sir A. Lyall, p. 246.

that men forgot its magnitude. Indeed, when he assumed office the growth of French influence in the courts and camps of native rulers was a serious menace to British power. No one could then know how quickly this menace would vanish before the Governor-General's vigorous treatment. Tipu was negotiating with the Governor of the Isles, and French officers were preparing to drill his troops. A French general commanded an army of 15,000 men in the Nizam's dominions, and Sindhia had 40,000 trained men under a French commander, so that Wellesley without much exaggeration could speak of 'the French state erected by M. Perron on the banks of the Jumna'.

The danger from French ambition Wellesley removed step by step, but he was not content with defensive strategy only. He projected an expedition against Mauritius, from which as a base French privateers preyed upon the shipping of the Indian Ocean, but was baulked by the refusal of Admiral Rainier to co-operate with him without authorization from home. He urged the ministry to take the Cape from the Dutch, now in alliance with France. He contemplated an attack upon Batavia, and in 1800 eagerly obeyed orders from England to send an Indian army to Egypt, which under General Baird landed at Cosseir on the Red Sea and marched across the desert and down the Nile to the shores of the Mediterranean at Rosetta, only to find the French force at Alexandria had capitulated, and that Bonaparte had abandoned his designs of direct eastern conquest. At the peace of Amiens, March 1802, which afforded but a thirteen-months' breathing space in the war with France, Wellesley on his own responsibility suspended the restoration of the French settlements—an action afterwards approved by the home government.

So far Lord Wellesley had carried with him in his policy the support of Pitt's ministry, though he had already alienated the sympathies of the Directors, who showed growing

uneasiness at the constant extension of their territorial possessions. There were other causes of dissatisfaction. Wellesley was one of the first statesmen to appreciate the teaching of Adam Smith, and his leanings towards the principles of Free Trade were not popular in Leadenhall Street. The appointments conferred upon his brothers Henry and Arthur, and even the salaries paid to them, were criticized in a manner that roused the fury of the high-minded though autocratic Governor-General, who stigmatized the comments of the Court as a 'direct, marked, and disgusting personal indignity' to himself. His far-sighted efforts to secure a better training and education for the civil servants of the Company by establishing the college of Fort William were neutralized, and, finally, the wide sweep of his political outlook which caused him to dispatch John Malcolm in 1800 on a commercial and political mission to Persia, aroused nothing but distrust and dislike in what the Governor-General afterwards allowed himself in a letter to Dundas to style 'the most loathsome den of the India House'. In January 1802 he therefore announced his approaching resignation, but the Directors, though as yet willing to wound, were still afraid to strike, and they asked him to retain office for at least another year. Wellesley, foreseeing trouble from the Maratha confederacy, acceded to their request.

'Wellesley's Maratha policy was destined to plunge him into a war which at its early stages proved to be the most successful and glorious ever waged by British arms in India, but later on was clouded by some unfortunate blunders and defeats. The fame of his governor-generalship was temporarily dimmed; the Directors clamoured for his recall; he lost for the first time the support of the ministry, and resigned before he could gather up the broken threads of his policy and complete his work.

The Maratha powers had regarded with great uneasiness

between the southern districts of Bengal and the northern possessions of Madras.

The blows dealt at the enemy were swift and terrible. Arthur Wellesley captured Ahmadnagar in August 1803, and, forestalling the combined armies of Sindhia and the Bhonsla in an attempted dash on Hyderabad, brought them to action on September 23, 1803, at Assaye, a village about forty-five miles north of Aurangabad. Though he had under 5,000 men and the enemy over 50,000, Wellesley won a 'transcendent victory', as the Governor-General exultingly described it, and utterly shattered the Maratha army in a fiercely fought battle, the British loss in killed and wounded amounting to over 1,500. The remaining strongholds of Sindhia in the Deccan were speedily captured, and he was forced to make a truce on November 23 which dissolved the confederacy. Sindhia ~~two months later was~~ secretly supporting the Bhonsla again, but Wellesley pursued them into Berar, defeated them at Argaon in November, and captured the great fortress of Gawilgarh in December 1803.

The campaign in Hindustan was perhaps even more important. There the Frenchman Perron, acting as Regent for Sindhia, had founded an almost independent power in the Doab, the land lying between the Jumna and the Ganges. Lake, marching from Cawnpore, captured Aligarh at the end of August, and so disheartened Perron that he left Sindhia's service. Lake defeated his successor at the battle of Delhi in September, marched into the city, and took under British protection Shah Alam, now a miserable, blind old man of eighty-three, 'seated under a small tattered canopy'. Lake made a treaty in October with the Raja of Bharatpur, occupied Agra on October 18, and vanquished Sindhia's remaining army at Laswari in November. In the minor theatres of war everything had happened as Wellesley had planned. In Gujarat, Broach was captured and all

Sindhia's territories taken from him. In Orissa, Cuttack had been occupied and the Bhonsla's forces defeated. Four months' campaigning had seen the utter defeat of the whole Maratha confederacy. It was a wonderful result of a campaign wonderfully organized, and unstinted praise has been rightly given to the master mind which willed and planned the whole.

Nor was the victory won over a despicable foe. The fighting was severe and the battles were fiercely and stubbornly contested. For all that, the enemy partly owed their defeat to their abandonment of the old traditional Maratha tactics of wild, plundering raids, a swift retreat, and harassing guerrilla warfare. The true fortune of Maratha armies, as Holkar, more successful than his rivals, contended, was on their saddle-bow. The trained battalions and batteries of Sindhia could crush other native powers; they could only offer a fierce resistance to the Company's forces. De Boigne, the able French adventurer, who had trained these troops, had always foretold that they would never conquer British armies. Sir Thomas Munro, an acute observer, wrote of the Maratha army, 'its discipline, its arms, and uniform clothing, I regard merely as the means of dressing it out for the sacrifice.'

The results of the campaigns were consolidated in two treaties, that of Deogaon with the Raja of Berar, and that of Surji-arjangaon with Sindhia. Negotiations were entrusted to Sir Arthur Wellesley, who added the laurels of a diplomatist to those of a soldier, claiming with truth that he had 'made two very good treaties of peace'. The territorial dominions of the East India Company were widely extended. Their power henceforward shadowed and protected the descendants of Akbar on the throne of the Mughals. The annexation of the Doab and the overlordship of the cities of Agra and Delhi carried the British frontier to the upper course of the Jumna and the barrier of the Himalayas.

The acquisition of Cuttack and Balasore linked up the Presidencies of Bengal and Madras, and all the eastern seaboard now passed under British control. Valuable districts were ceded in Bundelkhand and Gujarat. All Sindhia's possessions in the Deccan were forfeited, and a great part of Rajputana was freed from his sway. In addition both Sindhia and Holkar recognized the Treaty of Bassein, admitted British Residents to their courts, definitely surrendered their claims on the Nizam, and engaged to take no Europeans other than British into their service. The Rajà of Berar relinquished to the Nizam districts in Berar west of the Wardà river, and received a British Resident at Nagpur, while Sindhia, in February 1804, entered into a defensive alliance with the East India Company.

Wellesley triumphantly declared that the Peace 'comprehends every object of the war', as indeed it did, but he added, and here events proved him wrong, that it contained also 'every practicable security for the continuance of tranquillity'. Indeed Wellesley was curiously blind to the real feelings of the Maratha powers after the war, which were sullen resentment, bitter humiliation, and smouldering enmity. To the Governor-General in the enthusiasm of his victory, swayed no doubt by a half unconscious desire to win the approval of the ministry at home, it appeared that 'the influence and ascendancy of the British government in the councils of Hyderabad and Poona have been increased and permanently established, not by limiting the authority, controlling the independence, or reducing the power of these states, but by the operation of arrangements which have confirmed and corroborated their respective rights, authorities, and independence, extended their dominion, consolidated their power, and augmented their resources; secured them from the vexatious claims and litigious and violent interference of other powers, and

established the resources of permanent tranquillity and prosperity within the limits of their respective dominions. Our influence and ascendancy in the Councils of those allies are now founded on the solid basis of their entire confidence in the equity and moderation of our views and in their just reliance on our protecting power.'[1]

No doubt it was provokingly perverse of the native powers not to adopt these enlightened views, but their real feelings could hardly have been more widely different from this stately presentation of them. Nor did the Governor-General's eloquent arguments altogether carry conviction to the ministry in England. Lord Castlereagh, in a dispatch which crossed that from which the foregoing passage is quoted, hinted a doubt whether the recent acquisitions did not contravene (as they most certainly did) the policy upon which Parliament had hitherto professed to act, and render 'the frame of our government complicated and unwieldly in such a degree as to hazard its becoming enfeebled and embarrassed in ordinary hands', when the directing mind of Lord Wellesley was in due course removed from the supreme control.

The peace indeed was soon endangered. For this Wellesley, even in the opinion of his brother, was partly responsible by pressing upon Sindhia and the Bhonsla a too stringent interpretation of the treaties. These chiefs rapidly became disaffected, but war broke out actually with Holkar, who had taken no part in the recent fighting. On his plundering the territory of the Raja of Jaipur, Wellesley ordered operations to be commenced. For the first time his generals made mistakes. Colonel Monson, advancing too far into the plains of Rajputana, was forced into a disastrous retreat, losing five battalions and six companies. Sindhia soon rose in revolt, but the Maratha cause again waned. Holkar failed to take Delhi, ably defended by Ochterlony; one

[1] *A Selection from Wellesley's Dispatches*, S. J. Owen, p. 439.

army was defeated at Dig, November 12, and Holkar was himself routed by Lake at Farruckhabad, November 17, 1804. Then followed a serious error on the part of the British commander. The Raja of Bharatpur had abandoned the British side, and Lake determined to capture his famous fortress and capital. He was essentially a field officer with no experience of sieges, and he was hot-tempered and impetuous. He launched four successive assaults on Bharatpur, all of which were beaten back, with a loss in killed and wounded of 3,203 men, and he was driven to make a peace with the Raja in April 1805, leaving him in possession of the fortress he had defended—a serious blow to British prestige.

The disaster was far from irreparable. Holkar's power had received some shattering blows, and in all probability another campaign would have seen him vanquished, but Lake's failure seemed to justify all the warnings and premonitions of the Governor-General's opponents. Lord Cornwallis, now in his sixty-seventh year, was appointed to supersede Wellesley. He arrived in India in July 1805, and Wellesley left in August.

It is easy to inveigh against the Directors for not appreciating the late Governor-General's brilliant services, but there was something to be said for their point of view. The debt of the Company had rapidly increased under stress of the constant military operations from 17 millions in 1797, to 31 millions in 1806. Wellesley's attitude to the Court was marked by a hauteur and contempt that he did not trouble to conceal. A widespread belief was gaining ground in England that our Indian conquests were getting larger than we could profitably or even safely manage. We have seen that even in the hour of victory the ministry had faltered in their usual approval of Wellesley's actions, and in the shadow of defeat they withdrew their support. Pitt expressed the opinion that the Governor-General 'had

acted most imprudently and illegally, and that he could not be suffered to remain in the government'.[1]

There was a curious contrast in the treatment at home meted out to Lord Wellesley and his great predecessor, Warren Hastings. The Court of Directors on the whole, and the Court of Proprietors without any qualification, had steadily supported Hastings, and it was Parliament that had brought him to trial and striven for seven years to procure his condemnation. In the case of Wellesley Parliament promptly voted down two attempts of a private member to carry an impeachment, and passed a resolution eulogizing his ardent zeal for the public service. The Courts of Directors and Proprietors, on the other hand, pursued the late Governor-General with unrelenting opposition, and voted for his condemnation by an overwhelming majority. It was not till after the lapse of thirty years that they made their recantation by assuring him that they could now look back with feelings common to their countrymen to the eventful and brilliant period of his government in India.

[1] *Correspondence of . . . Marquess Cornwallis*, Charles Ross, vol iii, p. 522.

CHAPTER XXI

REACTION FROM THE POLICY OF ANNEXATION. LORD CORNWALLIS, SIR GEORGE BARLOW, LORD MINTO

THE aim of Lord Wellesley had been, as we have seen, to build up and consolidate British dominion in India, partly by absorbing those decadent, dependent rulerships such as Surat and the Carnatic, the administration of which had long been an eyesore to those imbued with western ideas, partly by securing a general control over all native states from Cape Comorin to the Sutlaj, maintaining in their territories subsidiary forces, and regulating their foreign policy.

An attempt was now to be made to withdraw from such wide responsibilities, limit the Company's sphere within a well-defined area, and leave the native powers outside the pale either to make their own peace or prey upon each other in intestine strife.

It may be noted that both Cornwallis and Barlow shrank from applying this policy with logical consistency. It was impossible now to denounce the subsidiary treaties with Hyderabad or Oudh, or even with Poona. The efforts of Wellesley's immediate successors were therefore confined to casting off embarrassing ties with Sindhia and Holkar, and sacrificing the subsidiary relation with those powers which Wellesley had contemplated. Even so, they went too far in the opinion of an acute observer, Metcalfe, afterwards acting Governor-General, who epigrammatically but rather unfairly described their policy as 'disgrace without

compensation, treaties without security, and peace without tranquillity.' The British, he held, could no longer hope to 'insulate themselves', and to meet Maratha ambition and enterprise with the language of peace would be to 'preach to the roaring ocean to be still'.

It is easy to pour contempt on such a policy, which in the retrospect of the historian compares unfavourably with the long views and masterly schemes of Lord Wellesley, but it must be remembered that, for the moment, the financial position was desperate. The treasury was empty. Expenditure was annually exceeding revenue, and the export trade was practically at a standstill. The preceding years, said Cornwallis, called annually for 'reinforcements of men and remittances of money', which yielded 'little other profit except brilliant gazettes . . . We literally have not the means of carrying on the ordinary business of government'. For this reason the veteran statesman, though he recognized that it was 'a desperate act to embark for India at the age of sixty-six', sailed at what he believed to be the call of duty to carry out an unpopular policy.

He entered upon office again as Governor-General and Commander-in-Chief in July 1805, and soon after proceeded to the Upper Provinces to pacify if possible the restive Sindhia, and put an end to the war with Holkar. Cornwallis desired to conciliate Sindhia by the restoration of Gwalior and Gohad, and to relinquish all territory west of the Jumna with the exception of Agra. But he undoubtedly went too far in his desire for peace. To limit British responsibilities to the line of the river unfortunately implied removing British protection from several Rajput chieftains who had rendered loyal service in the late war. Cornwallis contemplated the surrender of Delhi to Sindhia and the removal of the king to some point within British territory, and he was even disposed to abandon the demand for the release of the British Resident imprisoned by

Sindhia 'as a mere point of honour'. He exaggerated the danger of a renewed war, and altogether failed to apprehend how near the power of Holkar was to collapse. But it is ill criticizing the work of a dying man, and Cornwallis was dying by inches. Sending forward his instructions to the horrified Lake, who protested vigorously against them, he was carried up the Ganges. At the end of September one of his staff wrote, 'the powers of his mind are unfortunately failing him fast, he dozes away the remnant of life that is left him'. On October 5 he died at Ghazipur, having won, even from those whose policy he was opposing, the respect due to his sterling honesty and noble simplicity of character. He was succeeded provisionally by Sir George Barlow, senior member of Council, a man of mediocre abilities and unpopular manners, but a conscientious administrator, with the civil servant's characteristic virtues of a regard for economy and of loyally carrying out the policy of his superiors, whatever his own feelings might be. He had proved a zealous subordinate to Lord Wellesley, but he did not hesitate to follow on the lines that Cornwallis had indicated.

A new treaty was made with Sindhia in November 1805, by which some of the clauses of the Treaty of Surji-arjangaon were modified. The defensive alliance was not renewed. Gwalior and Gohad were given back to him 'out of considerations of friendship'. The East India Company were to claim nothing to the south, and Sindhia nothing to the north, of the river Chambal, but the British withdrew their protection (and this was the discreditable point in the agreement) from the chieftains of Rajputana who had supported their cause.

In the meantime Lake had advanced as far as Amritsar, having hunted Holkar northwards till he appealed, but appealed in vain, for assistance to Ranjit Singh, then founding his Sikh kingdom. The Maratha chief received far

better terms than he could have hoped for. Though he was called upon to renounce his claims north of the Chambal, he was promised the restoration of his forts in the Deccan after eighteen months. The Governor-General, dreading that the treaties with Sindhia and Holkar might imply that the Company was under an obligation to defend the trans-Chambal states, published declaratory articles surrendering Tonk and Rampur to Holkar, and withdrawing British protection from the rest, with the result that in a short time several of them felt the devastating hand of the Maratha leaders, and amongst others the Raja of Jaipur, to whom we were under special obligations.

Against these consequences Lord Lake bitterly protested, but Barlow had certainly carried out the will of the home government, and his policy held the field for ten years. With more political good sense than consistency he sharply recalled to his duty the Nizam, who was beginning to intrigue with the Maratha powers as though the subsidiary treaty no longer existed, and he successfully resisted the orders of the Directors to denounce the Treaty of Bassein. In internal affairs his considerable administrative talents enabled him to carry some drastic economies and to produce equilibrium in the finances.

A dangerous mutiny of sepoys at Vellore in the Madras Presidency afforded curious premonitory symptoms of the revolt of 1857. Some injudicious changes in military dress and new regulations in regard to the fashion of wearing the hair, like the famous order to use the greased cartridges, were taken to imply an attack upon caste and religion. As in the great Mutiny, the movement was fostered by the princes of a dethroned dynasty, the heirs of Tipu of Mysore, and was attended by the massacre of British officers. It caused the recall of Lord William Bentinck, the future Governor-General, from the governorship of Madras.

In 1807 Lord Minto, President of the Board of Control

in the new Whig ministry of 1806, exchanged that office for the governor-generalship. This step was the outcome of a curious deadlock. Barlow's appointment, at first avowedly provisional, had been made permanent with the consent of ministers. Ten days later Lord Minto announced to the Court the pending nomination of the Earl of Lauderdale. The Directors refused to acquiesce, on the ground that Barlow had been properly appointed and that Lauderdale was a free-trader, i. e. an opponent of the Company's monopoly, and a former supporter of the principles of the French Revolution. The ministry, exercising for the first time a right vested in them by Pitt's Act of 1784, recalled Barlow over the heads of the Directors without being able to give any convincing reasons for their sudden change of mind, which was strongly suspected to be nothing more than the desire to exercise a valuable piece of patronage. The constitutional question was raised in both Houses of Parliament, and produced a vehement though short-lived controversy. The Directors were unwilling to force a conflict with the Cabinet, and a compromise was effected by the withdrawal of Lord Lauderdale and the appointment of Lord Minto.

The new Governor-General, as Sir Gilbert Elliot, had been one of the managers for the impeachment of Warren Hastings and of Sir Elijah Impey, and his sympathies were therefore supposed to be against the expansion of British dominion.

Lord Minto went to India believing in the policy of non-intervention, and on the whole, in his dealings with the native powers, he did not depart from it. But though he waged no important wars on the soil of India, and maintained the settlement effected by Cornwallis and Barlow with the Marathas, he found himself obliged from time to time to abandon the strictest interpretation of a *laisser faire* attitude. To some extent as Governor-General he was forced

to unlearn the lessons he had inculcated as President of the Board of Control, and when he laid down his office British power was obviously on the eve of another great forward step. But it did not come in his time, and therefore for just a decade after the retirement of Lord Wellesley the Company's dominions may be said to have remained on the whole stationary. It is true the surface of Indian politics was not unruffled, but the greater Maratha powers had received such severe blows in the late wars that the disturbances which occurred were local and temporary, and the wide and interconnected movements of Lord Wellesley's time were totally absent. In addition Holkar became insane, and the most formidable enemy of British rule was thus impotent for harm. There were disturbances in Bundelkhand, now under the Company's control, having been exchanged for districts near Poona which the Peshwa had originally ceded in the Treaty of Bassein, and thus again recovered. The country was settled after several turbulent chieftains had been defeated and their strongholds captured, including the famous fortresses of Ajaigarh and Kalinjar. The Governor-General was forced to arbitrate between the Peshwa and some of his discontented feudatories. But the most striking instances of Lord Minto's divergence from a strict non-interference policy were in regard to the Raja of Berar and the Sikhs, the formidable people of the Punjab with whom the British now for the first time came into contact.

In 1809 a turbulent Pathan chieftain named Amir Khan, at the head of 40,000 horsemen and more than 20,000 Pindaris or robber bands, claiming to be in alliance with Holkar, invaded Berar. The British government had no obligation to assist Berar, for the Raja had always refused to conclude a subsidiary alliance; indeed, if Amir Khan were, as he claimed to be, really one of Holkar's generals, to interfere would be an actual violation of the treaty by which the Company had engaged not to interfere in Holkar's

affairs or with any wars he should wage with states not having treaty relations with the Company. Nevertheless Lord Minto decided he could not permit the forces of anarchy to be let loose in a country so near the frontiers of the Nizam as Berar, and he dispatched a force to aid the Raja of Berar merely on the grounds of preserving order, without exacting any subsidy or treaty in return. This act of moderation on his part, together with the fact that Holkar disowned Amir Khan, prevented his action from bringing on a general Maratha war, as it so easily might have done. Amir Khan was repulsed from Berar, and the peace of India was preserved.

The Sikhs are, properly speaking, not a race but a sect, and the name itself means 'disciples'. The religion was founded by a Guru, or Prophet, named Nanak (1469–1538), and developed by a line of successors, especially by Guru Govind Singh, who met a martyr's death at Delhi in 1708. Sikhism inculcates belief in one God; it denounces idolatry, caste distinctions, and the claims of Brahmanism. Its adherents, who were mostly of Jat origin, dwelt in the upper Punjab—in the troubled region which was so often the battle-ground of the Mughals and Afghans. Muhammadan persecution transformed a peaceful sect into a military theocracy, or commonwealth of the elect, known as the 'Khalsa', organized loosely into twelve 'misls' or confederacies. All true Sikhs took the surname of 'Singh', or 'the lion', and first as horsemen, then as infantry, they formed the finest native fighting force that ever took the field. They seized the opportunity of the anarchy in northern India, brought about by the invasions of Nadir Shah of Persia (1739) and Ahmad Shah Durrani (1756), to extend their hold over the Punjab. Though Ahmad Shah inflicted a severe defeat upon a great Sikh army in 1761, he returned to Afghanistan.

The greatest Sikh chieftain, Ranjit Singh, born in 1780, became a soldier, like Mithridates of Pontus, at the age of

twelve, made Lahore his capital in 1799, and gradually subdued all the other misls west of the Sutlaj. In 1805 Holkar, then flying before Lord Lake, begged for his aid; but Ranjit Singh, having no wish to quarrel with the British on his account, declined to afford him protection.

Ranjit Singh had long cast covetous eyes on the territory of the Sikh chieftains who dwelt east of the Sutlaj in the country lying between that river and the Jumna, sometimes known as Sirhind. These states had acknowledged the supremacy of the Marathas, and when Sindhia had been driven out by the British they had informally been taken under the protection of the Company. In 1806 some of the chiefs quarrelling amongst themselves called in Ranjit Singh, who, eager to extend his influence, crossed the river both in that year and in the following one. Some of the Sikh chiefs, taking alarm, applied in 1808 to the British Resident at Delhi for protection, and the Governor-General was called upon for a momentous decision. Ranjit Singh clearly set forth his view in the words 'The country on this side of the Jumna except the stations occupied by the English is subject to my authority. Let it remain so.' Were he left to himself, he would undoubtedly in a few years have brought the Cis-Sutlej Sikhs to subjection. Was he to be allowed to advance to the Jumna? To resist him might mean war, and indeed few at the time could have expected the conciliatory shrewdness actually displayed by the Sikh ruler. Nevertheless Lord Minto risked the consequences. He did more; it was decided not only to confine Ranjit Singh to the line west of the Sutlaj, but to suggest to him an offensive and defensive alliance against the French, if they should ever march on India through Persia. Metcalfe, a promising young civilian, was sent to negotiate this difficult business. Ranjit Singh astutely made non-interference in his designs east of the Sutlaj the price of an alliance against the French; but in the meantime the fear of a French

invasion had vanished, since Napoleon had embarked upon the Peninsular War. This completely altered the position of affairs, and the British envoy was now merely required to state that all Sikh states east of the Sutlaj had passed with the defeat of Sindhia under British protection, and to demand the withdrawal of the Sikh army. At first Ranjit Singh was obstinate. War was on the eve of breaking out when the Maharaja, conquered at last by Metcalfe's indomitable patience, yielded, and concluded at Amritsar, in April 1809, a treaty which guaranteed him from molestation west of the Sutlaj, provided he confined himself to that bank of the river.

Ranjit Singh is one of the great personalities of Indian history. A born leader of men, gifted with an iron will, selfish, treacherous, crafty, persevering, brave, and avaricious, he possessed just that combination of virtues and vices which is best adapted for building up an Oriental empire. Where he differed from many other great eastern potentates was in his statesmanlike recognition of the strength of the East India Company, the reliance he placed on British promises, and his loyalty to his plighted word. And so the Treaty of Amritsar was never broken while the Maharaja lived. The British frontier to the north-west, with its outpost garrison at Ludhiana, followed an unusually well-defined line, the course of the Sutlaj, and a powerful and friendly native state lay between the Company's dominions and any possible invasion from the mountains.

As we have seen, the mission to Ranjit Singh was partly due to fear of French designs; the same cause produced three other famous embassies by which, under Lord Minto's rule, the Indian government widely extended the sphere of its foreign relations. In the light of later knowledge, both geographical and historical, the fear of a Franco-Russian invasion through the north-western passes may seem almost grotesque, and in fact it was probably never within the

bounds of possibility. But no one, in those days when ancient kingdoms in Europe were falling like ninepins, could set a limit to the power and ambition of Napoleon. As far back as 1801 a joint expedition had been proposed to proceed by way of Astrakhan, Bokhara, Khiva, Herat, and Kandahar. The Battle of Copenhagen and the assassination of the Tsar gave Napoleon other work to do. Russia and Great Britain made a treaty in 1805.

Napoleon's eager brain next turned to an alliance with Persia. The king of that country, being at war with Russia, appealed to the Indian government for help on the strength of Malcolm's treaty of 1800, an appeal which was necessarily disregarded since Russia was allied to Great Britain. The King of Persia then made application to Napoleon, who sent General Gardanne as his ambassador to Teheran. A treaty was concluded by which the French agreed to aid Persia against Russia, and Persia undertook to provision and reinforce any French army marching through their country to invade India. But another rapid change in the European political situation followed. In 1807 Napoleon defeated the Russians at Friedland, and the treaty of Tilsit bound the Tsar Alexander to an alliance with France. Schemes were revived for a Franco-Russian expedition against India through Asia Minor and Persia, now to be reconciled to Russia by French intervention. Alexander, however, passively opposed the plan, perceiving that all the advantages would go to his ally, and having a better knowledge than Napoleon of the appalling difficulties of the route. Within a year Napoleon again had other work upon his hands, and the vision of a French empire in the East faded away. Indeed, as far as India was concerned, Napoleon's devastating career only served to generate the expansive force which brought about Lord Wellesley's great wars, to justify them in the eyes of reluctant British statesmen, and to force Lord Minto to embark on an Asiatic

rather than a purely Indian policy; while Napoleon himself, as events were to prove, was destined to spend his last years in the narrow prison of an island belonging to the East India Company.

Before the danger was recognized as over, John Malcolm, who had been sent to Persia by Lord Wellesley in 1799, was dispatched to Teheran by the Governor-General, while Sir Harford Jones was sent independently by the home government. A good deal of natural confusion and unseemly wrangling followed; but ultimately the Indian government accepted the treaty concluded by the Crown envoy, which bound the Shah to dismiss the French ambassador and resist the passage through his dominions of a European force marching on India, in return for a promise of assistance in men or money if his country were attacked by Europeans.

Mountstuart Elphinstone was sent with an embassy to Kabul on a similar errand. He did not, however, enter Afghanistan proper, for the Amir, Shah Shuja, met him at Peshawar and agreed to oppose the French and Persians in any attempt to march through his country; but before Elphinstone had returned, Shah Shuja was driven from his throne by intestine rebellion, and was clamouring in vain for British support in his dynastic troubles. Thirty years later he was to be restored with consequences equally disastrous to himself and those who reimposed his hated rule upon his subjects. The third treaty was concluded with the Amirs of Sind, who promised to exclude the French from their territory.

All these alliances were inoperative, for by 1810 France and Russia were at war again and the French peril passed away. The armies that Napoleon had dreamed of marching through the East were lost amidst the Russian snows. The Indian government, indeed, was able to turn from defensive diplomacy to offensive warfare. Successful expeditions were

undertaken, not only against French possessions in the East, but also against those of other nations forced into unwilling alliance with Napoleon. When Portugal passed under French control, Goa was occupied; and in 1809 Macao, a Portuguese station in China, was seized, a proceeding which nearly plunged the Company into a war with the Chinese Empire. The French frigates and privateers that made their head-quarters at the Isles of France and Bourbon had done brilliant service for their country and inflicted terrible damage on British shipping. In 1810, however, strong naval expeditions were sent against them by the Indian government. Bourbon (restored in 1815) and Mauritius (permanently retained) were captured. From the Dutch, whose country now lay at the mercy of Napoleon, the Cape of Good Hope had been finally taken in 1806. Amboyna and the Spice Islands were conquered in 1810, and in the following year Lord Minto won the consent of the home government for an attack on Java, the last Dutch eastern possession. A formidable fleet of ninety sail, carrying 12,000 troops under Sir Samuel Auchmuty as Commander-in-Chief, assembled at Malacca in June. Lord Minto himself accompanied the expedition, nominally as a volunteer, but really to organize the civil administration after the conquest. Napoleon had spared no pains to have the defences of the island strengthened, and had sent General Jansens, who had surrendered the Cape to the English, to command the 17,000 troops in Java, with the significant warning that 'a French General does not allow himself to be taken a second time'. The English expedition arrived early in August and promptly occupied Batavia. The main French army was lying behind strong entrenchments and redoubts at Cornelis, eight miles distant. The position was brilliantly stormed by Colonel Gillespie, and the broken ranks of the enemy were relentlessly pursued for ten miles. The French lost 6,000 prisoners, mostly Europeans, and 300 guns. They left 1,500 dead

within their lines or along the route of their flight. The English had 900 put out of action, including 85 officers. General Jansens retired to the eastern part of the island, but was soon forced to capitulate. Thus Holland lost the whole of her eastern empire. The Directors had ordered that if the expedition were successful, the Dutch fortifications were to be levelled and the troops withdrawn; but Minto, seeing that it would be an inhuman act to abandon the Dutch colonists to the mercies of an exasperated native population, had the courage and independence to disregard these instructions. Having crushed the dangerous revolt of a native chief, he entrusted the government of the island to Sir Stamford Raffles, whose administration forms a brilliant chapter in the history of British colonization. In 1814 their eastern possessions, with the exception of the Cape, were restored to the Dutch, Java being actually handed over in 1816.

These notable achievements added military glory to the rule of Lord Minto, who was created an Earl and sailed for England in 1813, to die within a few months of his return. When he surrendered his charge he could claim that, with the exception of the minor operations in Bundelkhand, he had kept an honourable peace in India without drawing sword against the native powers. But signs were not wanting that there was trouble in store for his successor. The outrages of the Pindaris, roving free lances and robber bands, in central India, the encroachments of the Gurkhas of Nepal, and the insolent defiance of the Burmese indicated that a period of unrest and disturbance was again approaching.

CHAPTER XXII

FINAL DEFEAT OF THE MARATHA CONFEDERACY. LORD HASTINGS

THE year in which the Earl of Moira (afterwards Marquis of Hastings) began his long and notable period of office marked a new stage in the history of the East India Company. Since 1808 the question of the renewal of their charter (which was to expire on April 10, 1814) had been to the fore, and a Parliamentary Committee was engaged in inquiring into every branch of their administration. Two great questions were involved, the commercial monopoly, and the political or territorial rights of the Company. It was fairly plain that neither Parliament nor public opinion would tolerate a further grant of the full monopoly of the Indian trade. On the other hand, there was practically no desire to oust the Company from its political position, and that for two reasons. The people felt that the immense patronage of the Indian services would be less corruptly administered by the Court of Directors, standing apart as it did from the Party system, than by ministers obsessed with the idea of purchasing the votes and allegiance of their followers; while politicians themselves were disposed to be well content with a constitution which gave them a very real control over Indian affairs, and yet enabled them, if anything went wrong, to shift a good deal of the responsibility upon the shoulders of the Company.

The Directors fought stubbornly for every inch of their ground, and even when they were plainly told that the free export of goods to India from the 'outports', i.e. Liverpool,

Bristol, Hull, &c., would have to be conceded, they contended fiercely that all imports from India should be brought to the London docks. But petitions against this restriction poured in from the great provincial ports and manufacturing towns; and finally, though they were allowed to retain the profitable monopoly of the China trade, the commerce of India was thrown open. The whole question was thoroughly sifted in both Houses of Parliament, and Warren Hastings, an old man of eighty-one, was summoned to give evidence. As that venerable figure appeared for the last time before the bar of the House where more than a quarter of a century before he had stood for so many weary years to hear his whole career arraigned and held up to scorn and obloquy, members of the House, obeying a spontaneous impulse, rose and uncovered, an act of respect they repeated when Hastings, having given his evidence, withdrew. His testimony was all against change and therefore, though listened to with deference, weighed little with his hearers. The whole inquiry, indeed, proved but a dismal tribute to the value of expert evidence. All the greatest Indian authorities, Lord Teignmouth, Munro, and Malcolm were opposed to the abolition of the monopoly, and even Lord Wellesley appeared in the unexpected rôle of the Company's panegyrist. The dangerous pitfalls that beset political prophecy are well exemplified in the solemn warning of the Court of Directors that, if the trade to India were thrown open, it would prove their own utter ruin, involve a breakdown in the civil and military services, endanger the tranquillity and happiness of the people of India, imperil British interests in Asia, and even, as they declared by a fine effort of imagination, overthrow the constitution at home. One point raised in the controversy must not be omitted in a volume of this series. As a last resort the Directors painted in vivid colours the perils of a European colonization of India. Merchants and agents, artisans and labourers would flock to the East and

settle in the country. These colonists, following the example of the North American states, would eventually achieve independence, and India would be lost to Great Britain. Such a danger only existed in the heated imaginations of interested controversialists, and, as a matter of fact, the immigration of Europeans into the country was still severely limited by statute. No person could proceed to India without a licence either from the Company or the Board of Control; they could be sent home by the government of India if it were deemed desirable, and they were made subject to the Regulation that forbade to Europeans the holding of lands. So little was actually done in the way of colonization that, in a period of eighteen years after 1814, the total number of persons not in the Company's service proceeding under licence to India was only 1,324. The ablest speech in the Commons was made by Canning, who shed the dry light of reason and the gleams of his mordant humour upon the overcharged statements of either side. The immigrants under the Act would probably be a few pedlars in hardware or needy knife-grinders, and they were hardly likely to project a colonial rebellion after the American pattern on the background of the immemorial East. In the Lords, Earl Grenville went much further than the government in his attack upon the Company, and in a speech of remarkable prescience advocated a scheme that would have antedated by many years the solution of succeeding generations. He held that twenty years, the term for which the Company's privileges were to be prolonged, was too long a period to farm out the commerce of half the globe and the sovereignty over sixty millions of people, particularly at a time when the whole fortune of the British Empire was at stake owing to the Napoleonic wars. Any plan adopted should be limited in duration to the restoration of peace. He believed that the Crown should definitely take over the political and territorial rights of the

Company, for 'no sovereign ever traded for a profit; no trading Company ever yet administered government for the happiness of its subjects.' The highest offices in India were already practically in the gift of the Crown, and appointments to the civil service should be made by competition from the great public schools and universities. The Company's military forces should be absorbed into the King's service, and the Indian markets should be thrown open to British capital and enterprise in the most unrestricted way. But Lord Grenville was half a century before his time. The Charter Act, as eventually passed, confirmed the Company in the government of India for twenty years from April 1814, and threw open the trade to India, but left them the monopoly of the profitable commerce with China. A small sum annually (£10,000) was allotted for the encouragement of education, literature, and science. For many years this fund was badly administered, but the clause marked the first open recognition by the government of the duty of ameliorating the moral and intellectual condition of the peoples of India.

The Earl of Moira, who came out to India in his sixtieth year, had been an opponent of Lord Wellesley's policy, and yet he was destined to complete the fabric of British dominion in India almost exactly as his great predecessor had planned it.

He was first called upon to deal with Nepal, the country lying along the northern frontiers of Bengal and Oudh for about seven hundred miles from the Sutlaj to Sikkim, and running back with an average breadth of about a hundred and thirty miles up the snow-clad slopes of the Himalayas. A Hindu race claiming Rajput origin had conquered the original inhabitants of Mongolian stock in the fourteenth century, and to some extent intermarried with them. The tribe of the Gurkhas under a powerful raja had, about ten years after Plassey, subdued the other ruling clans and

given its name to the whole race. The Gurkhas were a very hardy, warlike stock, and they soon found their narrow mountain home too confined for them. Checked in their northern raids by the colossal power of the Chinese empire, they had since the beginning of the nineteenth century pressed hard on the ill-defined frontiers of Bengal and Oudh, and about this time they seized some districts in the southern lowlands claimed by the East India Company. They refused to withdraw and hostilities began in November 1814.

The first war waged by the Earl of Moira presents a curious contrast to his great series of operations against the Maratha powers. He has been accused of a failure to appreciate or provide for the peculiar difficulties of the campaign. But it must be remembered that Nepal is one of the most difficult countries in the world for military operations; the gallant little Gurkhas are the best fighting race, with the possible exception of the Sikhs, that India produces; the forces employed had no past experience that could aid them to contend with the tactical and strategical difficulties of the hill country, while the generals, with the exception of Ochterlony, showed great incapacity. In spite of the fact that the army of invasion numbered 34,000, while the Gurkhas could muster no more than 12,000, the first campaign of 1814–15 was perilously near being a failure. General Gillespie, the hero of the fighting in Java, was repulsed and killed in a premature assault upon a mountain fort. General Martindale was checked at Jytak, the central attacks on Palpa and Katmandu, the capital, were driven back and only General Ochterlony in the extreme west of Nepal succeeded in holding his own. Later in the year more success was achieved, and in December 1815 the envoys of the ruling chiefs accepted a treaty involving the cession of certain territories and the residence of a British representative at Katmandu. The

central government however disowned the action of their plenipotentiaries and, though Lord Moira offered to moderate his terms, hostilities had to be resumed. Ochterlony, now in supreme command, advanced after hard fighting to within fifty miles of the capital, when the Gurkha chieftains announced their acceptance of the Treaty of Sagauli (March 1816). The Governor-General was only too pleased to accept the settlement, and no attempt was made to inflict a severer penalty. Both sides had learnt to respect each other's fighting qualities. The gains to British dominion were not unimportant. The Gurkhas abandoned most of their claims in the Tarai, or lowlands, along their southern border. The provinces of Kumaon and Garhwal at the extreme west of Nepal were surrendered, and the site of Simla, the future hot weather capital of British India, was thus acquired; the north-west frontier of the Company's possessions was carried right up to the mountains. A pathway was opened up to the regions of central Asia; 'countries before unknown have been added to geography; and nature has been explored by science in some of her most inaccessible retreats, and most rare and majestic developments. ... Roads have been cut along the sides of precipices; bridges constructed over mountain torrents; stations have been formed which have grown into towns; and the stir and activity of human life have disturbed the silence of the lonely forests, and broken the slumber of the eternal snows.'[1] A protective treaty with the Raja of Sikkim drove a barrier between the eastern frontier of Nepal and Bhutan. Unlike some native states, the Nepalese were content with having once defied the British power, and have never since that date departed from an attitude of friendly independence.

The war was over, and the Governor-General, now Marquis of Hastings, whose equanimity and patience had sometimes failed him during its course, could afford to draw breath.

[1] *The History of British India*, H. H. Wilson, vol. ii, p. 59.

At one time the danger of a wide-reaching combination of Indian powers against the British had seemed very imminent. The Gurkhas had sent their emissaries far and wide to Sindhia, Ranjit Singh, the Pindari chieftains, and even to the capitals of the Burmese and Chinese empires. After the first unsatisfactory campaigns, when the British forces were locked up in the hill country, the Maratha states and Amir Khan, the Pathan leader of free companies, were obviously making ready to fish in troubled waters; even our great Sikh ally, perhaps doubting for once of British invulnerability, had moved 20,000 men to the banks of the Sutlaj.

The government, with the approval of George Canning, the new President of the Board of Control, now turned to deal with the Pathan and Pindari hordes, who had made central India outside the ring fence of British dominion a hell upon earth for the cultivators of the soil, and had lately even extended their raids into British territory.

The Pindaris were first heard of during the wars waged in the Deccan between Aurangzeb and Sivaji. They followed the Maratha armies, as irregulars and skirmishers without pay, subsisting on the plunder of the enemy's territory. Some of them were of Pathan origin, but broken and desperate men of all races joined their ranks; since the beginning of the nineteenth century Sindhia had granted their leaders settlements in Malwa near the Narbada. After 1805, the Maratha powers, cowed by Lord Wellesley's wars, were mainly at peace. The Pindaris, without having the excuse of warfare, extended their raids far and wide in central India—mere plundering and looting expeditions attended by every form of infamy, torture, and outrage upon the wretched peasants.

The ravages of the Pindaris had done more than anything else to discredit the policy of non-intervention. Their

expeditions grew more and more daring and ferocious. In 1812 they broke into Bundelkhand, and for some time an attempt to keep them out was made by maintaining a line of fortified posts reaching from that district to the gulf of Cambay. The expedient proved neither economical nor effective. In 1815 and 1816 they plundered the Nizam's dominions, and in the latter year cruelly and wantonly ravaged the Northern Circars. This was the final blow that broke down the patience of the home authorities and the Calcutta Council. The Governor-General had long been urging war. Given a free hand at last, he made far-sighted and comprehensive preparations. To surround the Pindaris in Malwa, he gathered together a huge army of 113,000 men and 300 guns, subdivided into the army of Hindustan (four divisions) which he himself commanded, and the army of the Deccan (five divisions) under Sir Thomas Hislop. Such a force might seem excessive for the task of rounding up and exterminating an army of brigands; but the Governor-General realized that since the *laisser-faire* policy of the Cornwallis school was now being definitely reversed, he would have in every Maratha power a potential enemy eagerly waiting for any failure or faltering on the part of his generals. While one cordon of his army facing inwards had to encircle the robber bands, a wider ring facing outwards had to check the attempts of the Maratha states to break through to their assistance. His prescience was fully justified; 'the hunt of the Pindaris became merged in the third Maratha war'[1] and, though the campaign was brilliantly and finally successful, he had not a gun nor a man too many. The words above quoted give the key to the complicated operations which follow, and two main movements must be distinguished, the converging of forces upon the Pindari bands in central India

[1] *The Oxford Student's History of India*, by Vincent A. Smith, p. 204.

and the defeat or neutralization of Sindhia, Holkar, the Bhonsla, and the Peshwa.

Serious trouble for the past two years had been threatening from Poona. The Peshwa, one of the most treacherous and cowardly of his line, had fallen under the influence of an unscrupulous minister, Trimbakji, and was intriguing once more to place himself at the head of the Maratha confederacy. In July 1815 the minister of the Gaikwar of Baroda was basely murdered, when visiting Poona under a British safe conduct to settle some disputed claims and counterclaims between the two Maratha governments. Trimbakji's guilt was certain, and the Peshwa's complicity strongly suspected. Fortunately at this crisis the Resident at Poona was Mountstuart Elphinstone, who happily combined the qualities of a scholar, diplomatist, and man of action. He promptly demanded the arrest of Trimbakji, and the Peshwa, after prevaricating as long as he dared, delivered him up to the British authorities in September 1815. A year later Trimbakji made a romantic escape from his prison and could not be found, though it was strongly suspected that the Peshwa was in communication with him. The Peshwa was meanwhile mustering his forces; his whole demeanour was so shifty that Elphinstone threatened him with open war and forced him on June 13, 1817, to sign a more rigorous subsidiary treaty involving the cession of territory and an explicit renunciation of all claims to the supreme place among the Maratha powers. 'We had no choice', wrote Hastings, 'consistently with our own security but to cripple him if we left him on his throne.' A year before (May 1816) a subsidiary alliance at his own request had been made with Apa Sahib, the regent for the imbecile Raja of Nagpur, who was so dependent for his position on British bayonets that he left his capital to live under the protection of the camp of his auxiliaries.

The Governor-General therefore could feel, when he left Calcutta in July 1817 to begin his great enveloping movement, that two of the Maratha powers had no excuse for not recognizing the determination of the British to be supreme in India south of the Sutlaj and to crush the forces of anarchy. Sindhia remained, and his attitude was not encouraging, for he was obviously very uneasy as to the fate of the ruffians whom he partly protected. Lord Hastings gave him little scope for ambiguity. Having crossed the Jumna he marched towards Gwalior. He made it clear to Sindhia that the days of non-intervention were over, and that the British government intended to cast its protection over the states of Malwa and Rajputana. On November 5, 1817, Sindhia, practically under compulsion, signed a treaty which bound him to give assistance against the Pindaris, and abrogated the clause in the Treaty of Surji-arjangaon debarring the British from making treaties with the Rajput chieftains. The latter gladly and eagerly welcomed the sheltering arm of British protection, and treaties were concluded by Metcalfe at Delhi with nineteen Rajput states, including Jaipur, Udaipur, Jodhpur, and Bundi.

On the very day that Sindhia was coerced into signing the revised subsidiary treaty, the Peshwa rose in final rebellion, expecting that his example would be followed by all the Maratha powers. The British residency was sacked and burnt. Elphinstone made his escape, marshalled his forces, and, though fearfully outnumbered, brilliantly defeated the enemy at Kirki. The Peshwa fled southwards, and as he went possessed himself of the person of his titular suzerain, Sivaji's descendant, the Raja of Satara. He was pursued and defeated in several engagements, but for many months eluded capture, doubling and twisting on his course in the vain attempt to break through to Berar. The Maratha states of central India were themselves in sore straits. At Nagpur, Apa Sahib, who had mounted the throne on the murder

of the Raja, and at Indore, Holkar, or rather his government for he was still a minor, by a strange infatuation revolted just as the cordon of British armies was closing round them. They struggled desperately but fruitlessly in the toils. The forces of the Nagpur residency won a brilliant victory against terrible odds on the Sitabaldi hills on November 27. Holkar's forces were utterly crushed at Mehidpur on December 21. Both states were forced to accept treaties which greatly curtailed their territories and practically reduced them to vassalage.

Meanwhile, in spite of a serious outbreak of cholera in the British camp and the diversions created by the Maratha risings, the ring of fire and steel was closing round the Pindaris. They first darted northward, but were headed off from Gwalior and hemmed in on the south and east. Many of them were cut up and dispersed, but their wonderful mobility rendered it exceedingly difficult to prevent a certain number from making their escape. Very early in the campaign the Pathan leader, Amir Khan, who possessed a regular army with 150 guns, was persuaded to disband his forces on condition of being recognized as Nawab of Tonk. One Pindari leader was given lands at Gorakhpur, but many refused submission. Chitu, the most wicked and desperate of all, was hunted into the jungle and devoured by a tiger.

The final operations of the war were directed against the fugitive rulers of the defeated Maratha states. The Peshwa, after two more pitched battles at Koregaon and Ashti, bravely fought by his general Gokla, and having over and over again baffled and eluded his pursuers, finally surrendered to Sir John Malcolm on June 18, when that distinguished officer with excessive generosity, to the great chagrin of the Governor-General, guaranteed the fugitive a pension of £80,000 a year. The ex-Peshwa resided henceforward at Bithur, twelve miles north-west of Cawnpore, the city that

his infamous adopted son, Nana Sahib, was destined to desecrate with one of the most revolting of human crimes. Two hundred miles away, his confederate Trimbakji expiated his guilt by a lifelong imprisonment in the fort of Chunar near Benares.

In the long pursuit of the Peshwa the *fainéant* Raja of Satara had luckily fallen into British hands, and the Indian government, adopting the precedent followed by Wellesley in the case of Mysore, decided to confer upon him, as the representative of the line of Sivaji, a small principality carved out of Baji Rao's forfeited domains. He was accordingly solemnly enthroned as Raja of Satara on April 11, 1818. This policy was hardly justified by its results; the rule of the restored dynasty proved an evil and incompetent one, and Satara was one of the states to which subsequently the doctrine of Lapse was applied by Dalhousie; but the Indian government erred, if at all, on the side of generosity. An interesting alternative to the restoration of the old line was the suggestion of Sir Thomas Munro that the Company itself should assume the office of Peshwa, as in Bengal it had stood forth as Diwan.

Apa Sahib, the Bhonsla Raja of Berar, who had been pardoned and restored after Sitabaldi, proved a traitor, and his depleted dominions were given to another member of his house. He escaped from British custody and gathered together the remnants of defeated armies in the Mahadeo hills among the aboriginal tribes of the Gonds. After winning some preliminary successes, his bands were broken up; he fled to the Raja of Jodhpur and thence to Ranjit Singh, who was allowed by the British government to give him an asylum which was practically a prison. With the fall of Asirgarh in March 1819, the commandant of which had afforded help to Apa Sahib, the military operations of the war were concluded.

A great revolution had been effected in the political states

of India. To sum up very briefly the results of this most complicated and intricate of campaigns :—

The Pindaris ceased to exist. Sindhia without having stirred in his own defence was humbled and rendered impotent for harm. Holkar was left with but half of his original possessions. Nagpur was mulcted in territory and reduced to the condition of a vassal state. The Peshwa was dethroned and his hereditary office abolished. His dominions with the exception of the districts granted to the Raja of Satara became part of the Presidency of Bombay. Some of Great Britain's bitterest enemies were settled as pensioners or prisoners within easy distance of Calcutta. Her protection now shadowed the ancient houses of the Rajput states, and her dominion extended from Cape Comorin to the banks of the Sutlaj, across which the military commonwealth of the Sikhs, at the zenith of its prosperity, still wielded and disciplined by its able ruler, stood firm in friendship and alliance. Such peace and order as had not been known since the greatest days of the Mughal Empire extended through central India.

Full justice has not perhaps always been done to the moderation of British policy throughout this epoch. Seldom have forbearance and firmness been more happily combined. Those bad rulers, the Peshwa and Apa Sahib, were again and again given chances to reform. The terms offered to the ruffian leaders of the Pindaris might be described as excessively generous. The fall of Asirgarh revealed deliberate treachery on the part of Sindhia which might have justified his deposition, and had Lord Wellesley been Governor-General, we may conjecture that his days of political independence would have been numbered, but Hastings passed him over in contemptuous silence.

In spite of the warlike nature of Lord Hastings's administration, some most important civil and administrative reforms

were carried through. No Governor-General ever had four more brilliant subordinates than Sir John Malcolm, Sir Thomas Munro, Mountstuart Elphinstone, and Sir Charles Metcalfe, and all these men left the impress of their characters upon Indian history. Elphinstone's pacification of the provinces conquered from the Peshwa, and Munro's *ryotwari* settlement of the land revenues of Madras, i.e. a settlement made directly with the cultivators and dispensing with middlemen, are two of the abiding memorials of British administration. Elphinstone at Poona was ably seconded by Grant Duff, the Resident at Satara; and so by a curious coincidence two of the greatest historians of India were engaged at the same time in administrative duties in the same province.

In Bengal some legal reforms were found necessary owing to the congested state of the law courts. In civil actions the procedure was curtailed and simplified, while an important change was made in the administration of criminal justice. The rule laid down by Lord Cornwallis that the offices of collector and magistrate were never to be united, though in theory unimpeachable, had some practical disadvantages. A complete separation of the executive and judicial power implies a highly organized state. Among primitive civilizations there is much practical advantage, provided officials can be trusted, in uniting both functions in the same hands. Henceforward Lord Cornwallis's prohibition was removed. Lord Hastings probably felt, and with reason, that the newer generation of the Company's servants with their higher traditions would prove superior to temptations to which their predecessors had succumbed. Measures were also taken to protect the rights of the ryots as against the zamindars where experience showed that the working of the Permanent Settlement pressed too hardly on the cultivators of the soil. They were given a certain prescriptive right of occupancy as long

as they paid their customary rents, and these rents could no longer be arbitrarily increased.

A beginning was made, on humble lines, with the education of the natives by the establishment of vernacular schools near Calcutta, and the first vernacular newspaper was published by the missionaries of Serampore. The finances of India were prosperous, and the only shadow on the administration was caused by the rather doubtful transactions of the firm of William Palmer & Co. with the government of the Nizam. Their loans to the Nizam had received the sanction of the Governor-General, but there was some question whether they did not infringe an Act of Parliament against the financial dealings of Europeans with native states. The only charge that could with justice be brought against Lord Hastings was that he had failed to exercise due caution in examining the details of the case, and out of excessive good nature had suffered his confidence to be abused. The Directors had already voted him a grant of £60,000 after the completion of the Nepalese war, but henceforward their relations with him were strained, though they admitted the purity of his motives. He resigned office in 1821, but did not actually lay down his functions till January 1, 1823.

Lord Hastings had carried through a great and necessary work. His material achievements challenge comparison with those of Lord Wellesley, but he was of course not so great or commanding a figure. He owed much of the success of his administration to a brilliant band of subordinates, men who had been trained and inspired by his great predecessor. Hastings did not possess Wellesley's dignity, eloquence, or originality; there was an element of vanity in his otherwise estimable character, and signs are not lacking that he would hardly have shown Wellesley's equanimity in the face of reverses or his noble consideration of defeated generals. On the other hand, he conceived

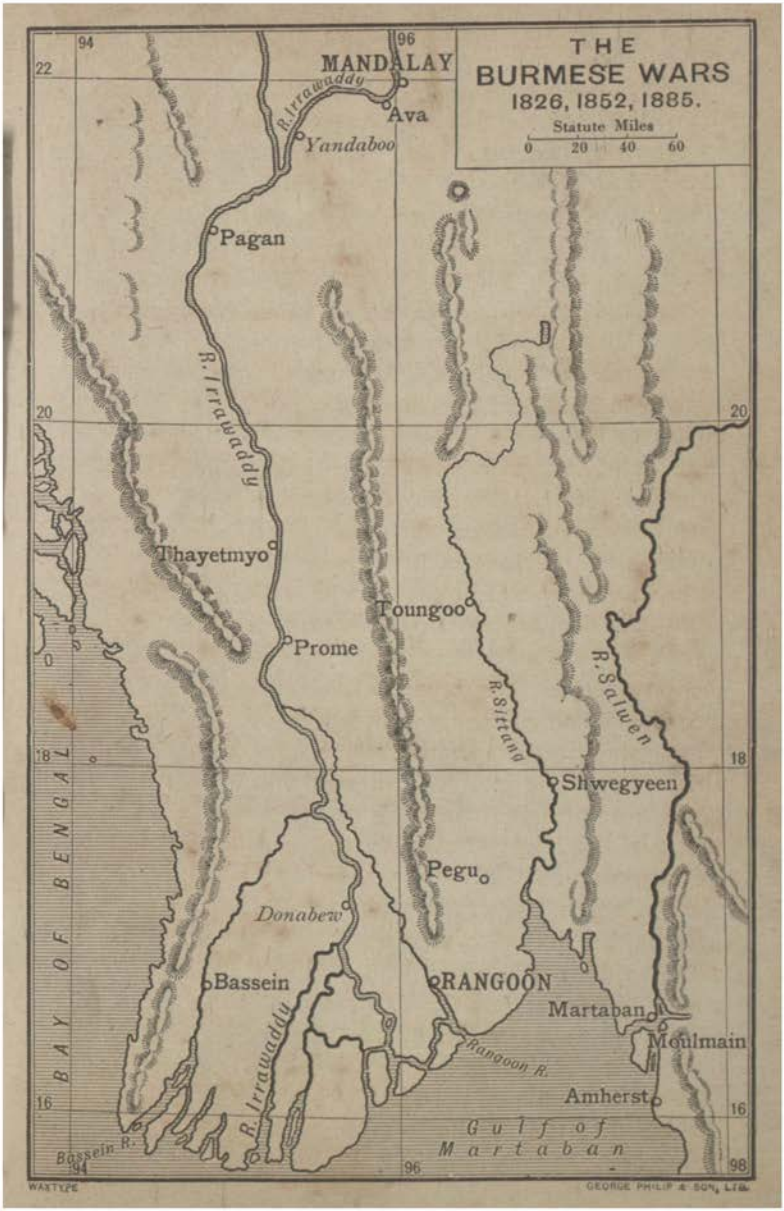
and carried through the grandest strategical operation ever undertaken in India, in the course of which twenty-eight actions were fought and a hundred and twenty fortresses taken without a single reverse. He was less precipitate than Lord Wellesley, less harsh to errant native rulers, and he did not proceed against them till his case was very strong. He was an able administrator, a hard and conscientious worker, a good judge of men, and his name and fame deservedly rank only just below the greatest in the roll of Governors-General.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE FIRST BURMESE WAR. LORD AMHERST

On Lord Hastings's resignation, the brilliant orator and statesman, George Canning, was appointed Governor-General; but before he could sail for India the suicide of the Marquis of Londonderry (better known as Lord Castlereagh) opened to him the office of Foreign Secretary and the leadership of the House of Commons, whereupon he resigned his Indian appointment. The Directors, after considering the claims of Lord William Bentinck, nominated Lord Amherst, who had shown firmness and restraint on an abortive mission to China. In the seven months' interval which elapsed before Amherst's arrival in India the reins of government were held rather uneasily by John Adam, senior member of Council. A capable official in a subordinate capacity, he was hardly fitted for the head of the government and attempted with unhappy results, as we shall see later, to check the free discussion of political affairs in the press. The fabric of British dominion in India having been completed by Lord Hastings as far north as the Sutlaj River, at last it might seem to those who desired peace and the maintenance of equilibrium that a period of quiescence had arrived. But again such hopes were doomed to disappointment. The frontier to the north-west was to remain unviolated for another twenty years, but to the north-eastward the boundary line was still perilously indefinite.

The vast Bay of Bengal forms a great irregularly shaped horseshoe, starting from Cape Comorin in the south-west to the Malay Peninsula in the south-east. British dominion


THE
BURMESE WARS
1826, 1852, 1885.
Statute Miles
0 20 40 60
MANDALAY
Ava
Yandaboo
Pagan
R. Irrawaddy
Thayetmyo
Prome
Toungoo
R. Sittang
R. Salwen
Shwegyeen
Pegu
Donabew
Bassein
RANGOON
Martaban
Moulmain
Rangoon R.
Amherst
Gulf of Martaban
BAY OF BENGAL
Bassein R.
94
96
98
22
20
18
16
WAXTYPE
GEORGE PHILIP & SON, LTD.

now extended continuously all up the western side, round the northern bend, and as the district of Chittagong bounded by the river Naaf formed part of the province of Bengal, it stretched for about a hundred miles down the eastern side of the bay. The eastern boundary line of Bengal, roughly speaking, might have been found by drawing a line from Chittagong northward to the hills; but it was very ill-defined and variable. Immediately to the east of this line lay the kingdom of Assam with various little independent or semi-independent states. Neither the Company nor its servants in India had any desire to increase their responsibilities or their territory south and east of their outpost Chittagong, and it may safely be said that not even the most aggressive of the Governors-General had foreseen that, within thirty years from this date, the red line of British dominion would have crept without a break down the eastern side of the bay to a point on the same parallel of latitude as Madura in the extreme south of India. But since there was no natural barrier of mountain or river to the province of Bengal upon the east, the same law of development which had governed British expansion in the past again became operative. The British dominion in India there came into collision with a people of Tibeto-Chinese origin, who spreading outwards from the fertile valley of the mighty Irrawaddy had conquered down the coast southwards to the Malay peninsula and northwards to the confines of Chittagong, and was seeking to extend its sway further inland over Assam and the Brahmaputra valley to the north-eastern bend of the Himalayas. The same decade that saw Clive's victory at Plassey witnessed the first great step taken by the Burman chief Alompra in the founding of his considerable power—the conquest of the province of Pegu from the Talaings in the delta of the Irrawaddy. In 1766 the Burmese wrested Tenasserim from Siam; in 1784 they annexed the hitherto independent

kingdom of Arakan, and by 1793 they had absorbed Upper and Lower Burma and were close to Chittagong. Fugitives flying from territories occupied by Burmese armies frequently took refuge over the British border, and sometimes, from a base established there, made retaliatory raids back upon the conquered provinces. The Burmese frequently demanded the surrender of the fugitives, and though, whenever they were clearly criminals, the British at Chittagong were willing to hand them over, they were naturally reluctant to refuse all right of asylum to defeated belligerents, especially in view of the cruelty of their enemies. In 1817–18 the Burmese forces were threatening Assam, and in the latter year they sent an insolent letter to the Indian government, laying claim to Chittagong, Dacca, Murshidabad and Cossimbazar. The letter was carefully timed, for the Burmese believed that the British were hard pressed in the Pindari war. Before it arrived, however, the danger had passed, and Lord Hastings with great forbearance chose to treat the dispatch as a forgery. The Burmese having in the meantime been defeated by the Siamese were, as the Governor-General had foreseen, 'thoroughly glad of the excuse to remain quiet'. The respite was only temporary; in 1822 the Burmese subjugated Assam and now confronted the British all along their ill-defined north-eastern frontier.

Their hitherto almost unbroken success had filled the Burmese with an overweening sense of their own prowess in war. They believed that no troops could stand against them, and 'from the king to the beggar they were hot for a war with the English'. Indeed, no conflict in which we engaged in the East was so wantonly provoked. In September 1823 they made an attack upon Shahpuri, a small island off Chittagong belonging to the Company, and commenced hostilities on the Assam frontier. British demands for satisfaction having been absolutely ignored, Lord

Amherst declared war on February 24, 1824. The campaign that followed was, considering the fighting qualities of the enemy, one of the most prolonged and least successful in the Company's history. The best defence of the Burmese lay in the natural features of the country, which was one vast expanse of forest and morass, laced longitudinally by mountain ranges and the valleys of the Irrawaddy, Sittang, and Salween. The central plain of Burma proper was regularly flooded in the period of the rains and clouded by steaming, noxious exhalations deadly to the health of European troops. As a fighting force in the open the Burmese army was a negligible quantity, but the Burmese soldier, each man carrying his mattock, was extraordinarily skilled at throwing up earthworks and sinking rifle-pits, or in building with great rapidity stout stockades of timber.

The British plan of campaign was to approach from the sea, capture Rangoon, and send an armed flotilla up the Irrawaddy to the capital; but the wrong season had been selected for such strategy. Rangoon was occupied in May by Sir Archibald Campbell, and then the rains, which transformed the Irrawaddy from a navigable channel into a rushing torrent, prevented for six months the advance up country. The Burmese had abandoned the town at the first appearance of the enemy and driven off all their flocks and herds into the jungles of Pegu. The British forces had thus to depend on rotting provisions provided by fraudulent Calcutta contractors, and amidst the fever-laden mists of the drenched country round Rangoon were soon decimated by disease.

In the meantime Bandula, the ablest Burmese general and the conqueror of Assam, was sent to attempt the invasion of Bengal from the north-east. He cut up an isolated British detachment at Ramu that had advanced too far from the base at Chittagong, but he was then recalled to march to the relief of Rangoon. In December he arrived

before the town with 60,000 men, but he was driven back and retreated to Donabew, forty miles up the river.

Elsewhere, when it was found that Campbell was cooped up in Rangoon, the Indian government attempted to advance on Ava by two expeditions, one marching southwards through Cachar and Manipur, the other through Arakan and up the higher valley of the Irrawaddy. Both were failures. The first expedition was baffled by the difficulties of the country between Cachar and Manipur, and effected a retreat to Bengal; the second occupied Arakan without much difficulty but made very slow progress through inefficient leadership, and was so terribly reduced by fever that it had ultimately to be withdrawn.

Though the main force was almost inactive at Rangoon or engaged on minor operations, Campbell, in the autumn of 1824, had employed the fleet to transport troops to Tenasserim, and the province was quickly reduced. From it he drew large supplies of fresh provisions and cattle for the suffering army at Rangoon. Thus in February 1825, though he had wasted valuable time on dilatory preparations, he was able to resume his long interrupted advance up the Irrawaddy both in the flotilla and on land. Bandula in April was defeated and killed at Donabew after holding out bravely for a month, and three weeks later Campbell occupied Prome, the capital of Lower Burma, where he spent the rainy season. In August negotiations for peace were begun but terms were rejected by the Burmese, who had not even yet learnt their lesson. Fighting began again in November, and the British forces, having routed the enemy's forlorn hope at Pagan, advanced to Yandaboo within sixty miles of the capital. There, on February 24, 1826, peace was concluded. The King of Ava agreed to cede the provinces of Arakan and Tenasserim absolutely, to withdraw from Assam and Cachar, to recognize the independence of Manipur, enter into a commercial treaty, admit a British

Resident at Ava, and pay an indemnity of a million sterling. A glance at the map will show the importance of these results. The Burmese empire had been shorn of most of its sea frontage by the surrender of two long narrow provinces. Tenasserim extends southwards almost as far as does Cape Comorin on the other side of the Bay of Bengal, parted from it by fourteen hundred miles of sea. Assam, Cachar, and Manipur could henceforward be reckoned as British protectorates, for the Burmese were debarred from interference in that quarter. But they were left in possession of the whole basin of the Irrawaddy, and they had access to the sea by its mouths and the coast of the broad wedge of territory that parted the two provinces ceded to the British from one another.

The war had been for those days enormously expensive, for it had cost thirteen millions sterling, or more than twelve times the charges for the Pindari and Maratha campaigns. It had lasted two years, and, when every allowance has been made for the great difficulties to be faced, it must be admitted that the conduct of it reflected little credit either on the Indian government or the generals in the field. The latter were far too deliberate and leisurely in their movements, and showed great lack of initiative. The Governor-General and his Council had no clear and consistent policy. Many of the difficulties of commissariat and transport could have been provided for, and throughout there was a lamentable failure to concentrate and economize the forces employed. Had it not been for the splendid work of Sir Thomas Munro, the Governor of Madras, in sending reinforcements and supplies, that failure would have been still more marked. At the conclusion of the war Lord Amherst was given an earldom—a distinction he can hardly be said to have earned. He was a man of very mediocre abilities, and never showed any real grasp of the Indian problems of his day.

In the meantime various minor disturbances had been caused throughout India by the conviction that the British would be defeated in Burma. Above all, a usurper at Bharatpur, the famous stronghold that had resisted the desperate assaults of Lord Lake, defied the British power by keeping the rightful heir, a minor, from his inheritance. Sir David Ochterlony, starting with some precipitancy to Bharatpur, was promptly recalled by the Governor-General, and soon afterwards died of an illness partly, it is supposed, brought on by vexation and chagrin. There were ominous signs of unrest in Malwa, Bundelkhand, and Maratha territory, especially after the recall of Ochterlony, which was attributed to British fear of attacking an impregnable stronghold. Sir Charles Metcalfe in a famous minute maintained that 'our influence is too pervading to admit of neutrality'. He won over the government to his view, and in January 1826 Lord Combermere took the great fortress by storm.

A more sinister fact was the Sepoy mutiny at Barrackpore near Calcutta in 1824. The native soldiers feared the Burmese as magicians, and also held they would lose caste if required to go on shipboard. Besides these reasons, the officers with criminal folly had refused to redress, or even inquire into, some very real grievances respectfully put before them by the troops. The mutiny was only quelled after the mutinous regiments had been fired upon by British artillery, and the parade ground made a shambles. The name of the 47th Bengal Native Infantry was erased from the army list.

CHAPTER XXIV

LORD WILLIAM BENTINCK AND INTERNAL REFORMS

WITH the retirement of Lord Amherst there ensued a ten years' respite from major military operations. The new Governor-General, Lord William Bentinck, was happy in his date. He could hardly have found a more favourable opportunity to carry out the liberal and humanizing policy to which he was devoted. At the end of the decade India was destined again to enter upon a troubled epoch; it proved fortunate indeed that, in the interval, measures for the improvement of the country and the amelioration of the people were pressed on. The reform movement, interrupted for a time by the campaigns that followed the governor-generalship of Lord Auckland, never altogether lost its impetus, and was resumed with fresh vigour at the close of the war period by Lord Dalhousie. At first sight, perhaps, the omens for Bentinck's success were not very propitious. He had been deprived of the governorship of Madras in 1807 for an alleged failure to cope with the mutiny at Vellore. As a soldier he had at least enjoyed the opportunity of seeing operations on the grand scale, for he was present at Marengo; but his own military career had been undistinguished, and in the Peninsular campaign he had not impressed the Duke of Wellington as possessing pre-eminent qualities either for war or diplomacy. He was a true Liberal of his day, thoroughly in accord with the ideals that inspired the era of Catholic emancipation and Parliamentary reform. His personal habits were simple, and

he intensely disliked the state that is generally considered necessary for the position he occupied. In this respect, as well as in his philanthropic care for the peoples of India, economy in administration and earnest desire to preserve peace, he may be compared with that other essentially Liberal Governor-General among his successors, the Marquis of Ripon. Bentinck's character to a certain extent lacks warmth and picturesqueness. Many were repelled by his chilling manner and somewhat cold benevolence. Yet he was undoubtedly the first Governor-General openly to act on the theory that the welfare of the subject peoples was a main, perhaps the primary, duty of the British in India, though this conception had already inspired the work of many great administrators, such as Elphinstone and Munro. Making every allowance for the warmth of personal friendship, and the eulogistic phraseology proper to the epigraphic style, it remains broadly true in the stately language of Macaulay's inscription that Lord William Bentinck ruled India 'with prudence, integrity, and benevolence . . . never forgot that the end of government is the welfare of the governed . . . abolished cruel rites . . . effaced humiliating distinctions . . . (and) allowed liberty to the expansion of public opinion'. The famous statement that he 'infused into Oriental despotism the spirit of British freedom' represents rather the pious aspirations of the Governor-General and the ultimate tendency of his policy, than anything actually achieved.

His internal policy may be briefly considered under the three heads of economical, administrative, and social reform. His first duty was retrenchment, rendered necessary by the wasteful extravagance of the Burmese war. Bentinck faced this task with his usual moral courage and noble disregard of personal unpopularity. A saving of one and a half millions was made by economies in the civil and military services. How necessary the reform was in the former case is seen from the fact that, even after the change, the average

income of a civilian, ranging from member of Council to writer (the lowest grade), was still as high as £2,000 a year. The scale of remuneration in the army had never been so high as in the civil service. We have seen how Clive, in 1765, abolished the custom of double 'batta' (extra allowances made to officers in addition to their pay) in the teeth of disaffection and mutiny. By enforcing the new rule that, in the case of troops stationed within 400 miles of Calcutta, only half 'batta' was to be allowed, Bentinck earned much unmerited odium—unmerited because he was merely carrying out imperative orders from home. Further, part of the land revenue of Bengal, which, through the indulgence of the government and the ingenuity of native forgers of documents had been fraudulently alienated, was recovered for the state. By these and other financial reforms, though he succeeded to a depleted treasury and a deficit of a million, he left behind him a surplus of a million and a half.

Secondly, in the domain of administrative reform, Bentinck abolished the provincial courts of appeal and circuit set up by Cornwallis, which by their dilatory procedure had blocked the course of justice and merely afforded 'resting places for those members of the service who were deemed unfit for higher responsibilities.' The judicial reforms of Lord Cornwallis had found no place for the employment of native Indian ability except in the lowest grades; and though this defect had largely been remedied since that time by the appointment of many native judges, the home authorities and the most enlightened of the civil servants in India were in favour of extending the principle. Measures were now taken, therefore, to enlarge the jurisdiction of the native judges and increase their salaries. At the same time a great boon was conferred upon the suitors by permission to use the vernacular tongue instead of Persian, which had hitherto by an absurd legal convention been the language of the courts. Under Lord William Bentinck the great revenue

settlement of the North-west Provinces, which took ten years to complete, was begun by Robert Bird. It was made for thirty years, and, according to the locality, either with the tillers of the soil, the landowners, or in some cases the village community, and it affected territory populated by 23,000,000 people.

Thirdly, there were the social reforms that have immortalized his name. He abolished, in 1829, the Hindu practice of *Sati*, or Suttee—the immolation of widows on the funeral pyres of their husbands. By this inhuman rite no fewer than 700 women were said to have been burnt alive in 1817 in Bengal alone. The prohibition of *Sati* had been urged by the Court of Directors upon Lord Amherst, but he shrank from interfering with a custom sanctioned by Brahman approval. Even men like Elphinstone, whose humanity was beyond question, seem to have dreaded the change, on the ground that it would violate the Company's traditional policy of toleration, and there were many dismal prophecies of disturbances if the custom were prohibited. But Bentinck, who had the courage of the genuine reformer, gladly took full responsibility upon himself, and, as so often happens, none of the gloomy prognostications of the prophets of evil were fulfilled. In 1830 there began, through the instrumentality of Colonel Sleeman, the breaking up of the Thugs (Thags), brotherhoods of hereditary assassins who, formed into a caste and worshipping the goddess Kali, went about the country strangling and robbing peaceful travellers. By such means Bentinck showed his care for the moral and material welfare of the people. Their intellectual development was affected by a change which had far-reaching consequences. It was decided in 1833 that the funds granted by government for education should be henceforward devoted, not to the fostering of Oriental learning, but to the instruction of the natives of India in the English language and in western science. There were many opponents of this change,

ably led by H. H. Wilson, the historian; but the question was really settled by a famous minute of Lord Macaulay, at the time a member of the Governor-General's Council, who trenchantly routed the Orientalists. Macaulay characteristically saw only one aspect of the question. Subsequent experience has shown that there was more to be said on the other side than he was prepared to admit. But actual trial alone could reveal the fact that many of the extravagant hopes based upon the change were doomed to disappointment. Further, it was not so much the fact that English was established as the official and literary language that was unfortunate, as the choice of models and text-books afterwards made. It would have been prudent to train the subject races for self-government by inculcating obedience to law and a sense of discipline. The whole trend of English ideas for the next fifty years lay in the direction of a pronounced individualism and freedom from restrictive bonds of every kind. Englishmen with law-abiding habits and phlegmatic temperaments could indulge in revolutionary theories without any noticeable effect upon their practice. But the quicker and subtler brain of the Oriental is not so apt to keep speculation and action apart. The prose models, on which for many years Indian education was based, consisted of Burke, Bentham, Mill, and the philosophical Radicals. Absurdly enough, our Eastern subjects were prepared for taking their part in the government of the country by the study of writers who taught that government itself was at best a necessary evil. We attempted to raise a race of administrators on the literature of Revolt. This unfortunate feature affected one department of knowledge only. In other fields, in the domain of science, law, and letters, the results were all to the good.

In foreign affairs and in his relations with the native powers, Bentinck sedulously upheld the doctrine of non-intervention pressed upon him by the authorities at home.

In this aspect his administration has won less favour with historians. It is undoubtedly true that non-interference necessarily involved to some extent condoning evils in states bordering upon British dominion. Native princes were left a free hand as long as they discharged their treaty obligations to the Company; 'the character', says Wilson, 'of an importunate and self-interested creditor, was to be substituted for that of a benevolent and powerful protector'.[1] But it was worth while to give the principle an extended trial, and Bentinck's defenders may justly claim that the great benefits which the period of peace enabled him to confer upon British India proper, should be set against any evils that he was forced to tolerate in native states. In necessary cases he did not even shrink from intervention. But his motive was always hatred of misgovernment, not extension of British influence or acquisition of territory. Three cases may be especially noticed: in one he took over the whole administration of a feudatory state, in the other two he made his only annexations to British dominion. In Mysore the Raja set up by Lord Wellesley, when he came of age, proved utterly unworthy of the trust conferred upon him. But Wellesley had explicitly reserved the right of resuming the government of the state in the event of mal-administration, and therefore Bentinck in 1831, though he is afterwards said to have regretted doing so, pensioned off the Raja, and for fifty years the country was administered entirely by British officials. In 1832 the small principality of Cachar on the north-east frontier of Bengal, from which the Burmese had withdrawn by the Treaty of Yandaboo, was annexed at the request of the inhabitants. A high forest-clad district, it has since been cleared and covered with tea plantations. In 1834 he deposed the Raja of Coorg, a monster of cruelty, and incorporated the country in British dominion, 'in consideration of the unanimous wish

[1] *The History of India*, H. H. Wilson, vol. [illegible] p. 365.

of the people'. Coorg lies between Mysore and the ocean on the western coast of southern India, and, standing 3,000 feet above sea-level, it has been found to possess a healthy climate and to be especially adapted for the cultivation of the coffee plant.

Disturbances appeared in Bhopal, Gwalior, and Jaipur, embarrassing to the Governor-General, who, however, steadily refused to swerve from his considered policy of neutrality. But all indications go to show that before very long even he would have been compelled to enter on a more active foreign policy. In 1835, on the eve of his departure, he recorded his conviction that the advance of Russia towards the Indian frontier was the greatest danger to which our empire in the East was exposed, and it has been well noticed by Sir Alfred Lyall that his commercial treaty with Ranjit Singh, and the agreement with the Amirs of Sind (to be dealt with later), were but preliminary steps that led to the Afghan war. But that forward movement, had Bentinck remained to direct it, would never have taken so violent and fatal a course as it did.

This peaceful and financially prosperous administration undoubtedly did the East India Company a great service, for any disastrous war or pecuniary deficit would have been promptly driven home when the question of the renewal of the charter, which expired in 1834, again came to the fore.

The monopoly of the Indian trade had gone in 1813. It soon became clear in the long debates in Parliament, and negotiations between the Court and the Board of Control, that the Company could not hope to save its monopoly of the China trade. Ideas of Reform and Free Trade were everywhere triumphant, and Huskisson himself led the attack upon the Company. It was not even permitted to compete in the China trade on level terms with private traders, but was forced to divest itself of its commercial

character altogether, and to part with its assets at a valuation. At one time it hardly appeared probable that it would retain its existence as a governing body, but ministers shrank from taking over the whole administration of India, and the Company remained in an anomalous position, half a private corporation, half a government department, its dividends now fixed at 10½%, a charge upon the revenues of India—in Lord Ellenborough's striking phrase, 'in the very undignified and not very popular position of the mortgagees in possession'. The Charter Act further constituted a fourth Presidency of Agra (soon afterwards, 1835, reduced to the lieutenant-governorship of the North-west Provinces), conferred on the government of India the power of passing Acts instead of Regulations, added a fourth (legal) member to the Council of the Governor-General (Macaulay being the first to hold the office), gave the head of the supreme government for the first time the title of Governor-General of India (instead of Governor-General of the Presidency of Fort William in Bengal), and definitely and finally subordinated the Presidencies of Bombay and Madras to his control. The Act further gave the stamp of national and Parliamentary approval to the liberal policy of the reigning Governor-General in laying down the famous principle, a full realization of which is only becoming possible in our own time, 'that no native of India, nor any natural-born subject of his Majesty, should be disabled from holding any place, office, or employment, by reason of his religion, place of birth, descent or colour'.

Finally, every British subject was to enjoy the right of proceeding to the principal seats of government in India without licence, and of purchasing and holding lands. Henceforward, therefore, there was no legal barrier to the colonization, in the ordinary sense of the word, of the Presidency towns. On Lord William Bentinck's resignation in 1835, Sir Charles T. Metcalfe, one of the ablest of the

Company's servants in India, who had just been appointed Governor of the new Presidency of Agra, was made provisional Governor-General. The Court of Directors at first desired that his appointment should be permanent, till he completely forfeited their favour by carrying in September his famous Act, freeing the Press in India from all restrictions. The previous history of Press regulations in India is complicated and not very easy to summarize. The censorship had been originally established by Lord Wellesley in 1801, for military reasons during the war with France. A government official was charged with the duty of reading all journals before publication, and striking out anything he deemed inadvisable. This censorship was nominally abolished by Lord Hastings seventeen years later—nominally, because, though he did away with the name of an invidious office, he issued a comprehensive set of rules, very strictly limiting the topics with which Indian papers might deal, and practically prohibiting all criticism of the Executive under penalty of deportation from India. John Adam in 1823 sent back to England an editor who, in spite of having received many warnings from Lord Hastings himself, had infringed these restrictions. In the same year new regulations were made obliging every printer in Bengal to obtain a licence before he could publish a newspaper; four years later a similar rule was adopted in Bombay. These regulations remained in force till they were repealed by Metcalfe.

The governor-generalship was offered to Mountstuart Elphinstone, but declined by him owing to feeble health. The Tory government then nominated Lord Heytesbury, formerly ambassador to St. Petersburg, but before he could sail, the Ministry fell and the Whigs cancelled the appointment—an action which naturally exposed them to a storm of criticism. In an evil hour for India and Great Britain, they entrusted the governor-generalship to Lord Auckland. Metcalfe agreed to accept the lieutenant-governorship of

the North-west Provinces, but found he had completely lost the confidence of the Court of Directors, and, on being passed over for the governorship of Madras, resigned the service. The Directors thus allowed one of their ablest servants to leave India. Metcalfe lived to earn further distinction under the Crown; he became successively Governor of Jamaica in 1839, and Governor-General of Canada in 1842. His later career will be found described in other volumes of this series.

CHAPTER XXV

THE FIRST AFGHAN WAR. LORD AUCKLAND AND LORD ELLENBOROUGH

WITH the accession of Lord Auckland to office the chief centre of political interest shifts to the north-west frontier of India, and it will be necessary briefly to sum up the course of events in that quarter since the famous treaty with Ranjit Singh in 1809. That treaty extended the British sphere of influence in the form of protectorates over the Rajputs and the Sikhs of Sirhind to the banks of the Sutlaj. Beyond that river, Ranjit Singh had been left a free hand to continue his career of conquest. The whole of the Punjab soon acknowledged his sway. ' The army of the Khalsa, originally composed almost entirely of horsemen armed with matchlocks, was transformed mainly into infantry battalions and artillery brigades. Having subdued the other Sikh chieftains Ranjit Singh came into collision with the eastern outposts of Afghanistan. He seized Attock on the Indus, took Multan in 1818, conquered Kashmir in 1819, and during the next two years subdued the Derajat—the long strip of plain country between the Indus and the hills. In 1822 he took into his service two of Napoleon's officers who had fought at Waterloo, Allard and Ventura, and these men with Court and Avitabile, who followed them, made the Sikh armies a still more formidable fighting force. Though twice defeated by the Afghans, Ranjit Singh ultimately made himself master of Peshawar, and forced the Afghan governor to pay him tribute. He had now welded together a compact kingdom embracing the Punjab and Kashmir

and running up on the north-west to the base of the Afghan hills.

The conquests of the Sikh chief drew the attention of the Indian government to the north-west. They had long desired to obtain some influence in the valley of the Indus, and in 1831 Captain Alexander Burnes, a brilliant young linguist and traveller, under the thinly veiled pretext of conveying a present of English cart-horses to Ranjit Singh from Lord Ellenborough, President of the Board of Control, was sent up the Indus and the Chenab to Lahore. Later in the year Lord William Bentinck, conquering for political reasons his innate dislike of pageantry, met Ranjit Singh in great state on the banks of the Sutlaj, and renewed the treaty of alliance.

Beyond the north-western frontier of the Sikh dominions lay Afghanistan, a bleak tableland sloping gently from north-east to south-west, intersected by deep ravines and surrounded by steep mountain ranges. It contained three important cities—Kabul, nearly 6,000 feet above sea-level, in the north-east, Kandahar in the south-east, and Herat to the north-west. The political state of Afghanistan had long been one of anarchy. It is impossible here to unravel the tangled skein of intrigue and dynastic revolution. In 1836 Shah Shuja Abdali or Durrani, the Amir, to whom Lord Minto had sent Mountstuart Elphinstone in 1809, was living at Lūdhiana, a pensioner of the British government. Dost Muhammad of the Barakzai clan was established at Kabul, and three of his brothers, who hardly pretended to acknowledge his authority, were lords of Kandahar. Herat was still ruled by a prince of the Durrani dynasty which Dost Muhammad had displaced in Kabul. Afghanistan was beset on the east by the Sikhs, and on the north and west by Persia. Just as Ranjit Singh, debarred by Lord Minto's Treaty of 1809 from expansion eastwards, was eager for aggrandizement at the expense of his northern neighbours,

so the Shah of Persia, who had been forced to yield part of his northern territory to the Russians, was determined, if possible, to compensate himself towards the south-east. Afghanistan seemed thus in imminent danger of being squeezed out of existence between the two powers. In 1833 Shah Shuja had sought alliance with Ranjit Singh in an abortive attempt to recover his throne, and the Sikh monarch had seized the opportunity to occupy Peshawar. Four years later the Persian armies, trained and officered by Russians, were gathering round the walls of Herat.

The Afghan policy of Lord Auckland has met with practically universal condemnation at the hands of historians, and every re-reading of the evidence deepens and strengthens the conviction that the war was politically one of the most disastrous, and, morally, one of the least justifiable ever waged by the British in India. Of that verdict there can be no reversal. Yet it is at least possible to recognize that there were many difficulties confronting Lord Auckland in 1837. It is far easier to understand how the policy was initiated than to conceive why it was persisted in, when many of these difficulties had solved themselves, and every voice of weight and experience was raised in protest against it. The chief motive in the whole business was perhaps the dread of Russian influence in Asia. We have seen that by the Treaty of Teheran, concluded in 1809 and revised in 1814, Great Britain had agreed to help Persia with men or money against any European invader. The only result of that not very prudent engagement was to place us in an embarrassing and slightly ridiculous position. When Persia and Russia were at war in 1826 the Shah appealed to his ally, and the folly of contracting such obligations to a distant central Asian power was at once apparent. The British lamely excused themselves from rendering aid on the plea that the Persians were the aggressors, though it was perfectly clear that they had only declared war after

frequent and repeated provocation from the Russians. When the war was over and the Persians severely defeated, the British government attempted to salve their political conscience by paying their ally a large indemnity to cancel the clause in the treaty of 1814 which bound them to aid Persia.

This not very impressive stampede from their treaty obligations left British statesmen with an uneasy sense of danger from Russian power, which indeed during the preceding fifty years had grown at an amazing rate. McNeill, British Minister to Persia in 1836, pointed out that a Russian regiment 'at her farthest frontier post, on the western shore of the Caspian, has as great a distance to march back to Moscow as onward to Attock on the Indus, and is actually farther from St. Petersburg than from Lahore, the capital of the Sikhs'. With excessive political prevision, Englishmen looked forward to the time when the Russian frontier should be conterminous with our own on the north-western frontier. They hardly seem to have realized that these vast distances were as much a source of weakness as an evidence of strength. Russia's outposts were still at least a thousand miles away from the Indian boundary and a corresponding distance from their base. The alarm of the ministry seems now excessive, for we appreciate better the difficulties of the approach from central Asia to the north-western ramparts of India. But it was at any rate obvious that Russian agents were encouraging the Persian advance on Afghanistan, and it was considered prudent to check this advance as far from the British frontier as possible.

Dost Muhammad was eager for an alliance with the British government. The chief difficulty in the way of accepting his proposal was that he made it a condition of his friendship that British diplomacy should be exerted to prevail on Ranjit Singh to restore Peshawar to him. Now Lord Auckland was undoubtedly right in deciding at all

hazards to retain the friendship of the Sikh ruler, who was one of the most remarkable characters in Indian history. Illiterate, a drunkard, cruel, despotic, and unscrupulous, he realized, as no other eastern potentate ever did, the value to himself of our friendship, and he was absolutely loyal to his treaty obligations. It was certainly not worth while to jeopardize that alliance for the support of Dost Muhammad, who, though an able ruler and, as events were to prove, really desirous of a treaty with the British, was less known to us at the time. As it happened, the difficulty was by no means as formidable as it appeared: Burnes himself considered, and many others have since held, that the Peshawar question could have been solved by diplomatic treatment, and that it would have been perfectly possible to win the friendship of Dost Muhammad, of whose ability he warned Lord Auckland, without losing that of Ranjit Singh.

Were that idea abandoned, the wise course would now seem to have been to withdraw from all interference with Afghanistan, leaving Dost Muhammad to defend himself, rest the British line of defence on the Sutlaj, and support Ranjit Singh, if possible, with men and money against all aggressors. Then, before the Persian and Russian armies could have reached our frontier, they would first have had to conquer and traverse the terrible plateau of Afghanistan and defeat the powerful army of the Khalsa trained and led by Napoleon's generals. It is only fair, however, to note that one objection to this policy was that there was a deeply ingrained conviction in the minds of all politicians of the day that the mere fall of Herat, both for political and geographical reasons, would irretrievably damage British prestige in India itself. 'Near Herat', says Sir T. H. Holdich, 'there exists the only break in the otherwise continuous and formidable wall of mountains which traverse Asia from the Bering Strait to the Caspian Sea. Near Herat it is possible to pass from the Russian outposts . . .

to India without encountering any formidable altitude—and this is possible nowhere else.'[1]

Before describing Lord Auckland's own policy, it is necessary to narrate briefly the course of events. Immediately on his arrival in India, Dost Muhammad appealed to him for support against Persia and Ranjit Singh, and received an answer to the effect that it was not the practice of the British government to interfere in the affairs of other independent states. Dost Muhammad either at the same time or soon after made overtures to Persia and Russia, probably with the idea only of exerting diplomatic pressure on the British. But Lord Auckland, in spite of his pretence of non-interference, could not bring himself to let Dost Muhammad go his own way.

Captain Burnes was sent to Kabul, nominally on a commercial mission. The Persians, with Russian support, were already marching on Herat, and two months after Burnes's arrival in Kabul the siege began. Had the town fallen, the seriousness of the position as regards Afghanistan would have been intensified a thousand times. But a young British officer, Eldred Pottinger, who was travelling in Afghanistan, entered the town disguised as a Muhammadan devotee, and organized a gallant defence.

Two months after Burnes's arrival a Russian emissary entered Kabul, but for a time Dost Muhammad kept him at arm's length. It was quite obvious that the Amir would have preferred an English to a Russian alliance, and Burnes himself wrote to Lord Auckland that it was a pity we could not act with him. But the Governor-General and his advisers seem to have conceived a most unreasonable prejudice against this able ruler. They required him in a supercilious dispatch to break with Russia, but would not engage to protect him from the result of such an action, promising merely to use their good offices with Ranjit Singh

[1] *The Imperial Gazetteer of India*, vol. i, p. 14.

for the restoration of Peshawar. Dost Muhammad naturally swung over to the Russo-Persian side. The Russian envoy, hitherto treated with coolness, was received with marked favour, and Burnes left Kabul five days later.

Then Lord Auckland took the fatal plunge. He determined, with the aid of Ranjit Singh, 'the old man of Lahore', to depose Dost Muhammad, and place once more upon the throne Shah Shuja, the discredited pensionary of Ludhiana, who had failed in an attempt to recover his kingdom only four years before. In this he acted without consulting his Council, against the advice of his Commander-in-Chief, and in opposition to the Board of Directors. The ministry in England must share the blame, for a letter from Sir John Hobhouse, President of the Board of Control, approving of the policy, crossed the dispatch of the Governor-General announcing its adoption. Macnaghten, secretary to the government, a man of the highest intellectual attainments, like Burnes a brilliant linguist and a high authority on Indian law, was sent to Lahore, and the famous Tripartite Treaty between the Sikhs, Shah Shuja, and the East India Company was signed June 26, 1838. The treaty itself laid no obligation on the British even to cross the Indus. Auckland's first idea was to make a demonstration in force at Shikarpur, while Shah Shuja was replaced on his throne by his own adherents and his Sikh allies. It was soon ascertained, however, that unless he received more effective help he would never be restored at all. When Macnaghten returned from Lahore he found that the Governor-General had already committed himself to an invasion of Afghanistan. The objections to this policy were in truth overwhelming. It was morally unjustifiable. However much it might be opposed to British interests, Dost Muhammad had a perfect right as an independent sovereign to ally himself with Persia or Russia. It was politically inexpedient, for Dost Muhammad was an able ruler and had won the rarely yielded allegiance

of his Afghan subjects. Though Shah Shuja was by no means lacking in capacity, his career had been one long failure. Expelled from the throne in 1809, his two attempts to return had ended in complete disaster. He was distrusted and disliked in Afghanistan, and his cause there never aroused one spark of enthusiasm. It was proposed, too, by an amazing perverseness to make him ruler over a fanatical Muhammadan people by the aid of Hindu Sikhs, between whom and his future subjects there had raged, only five years before, a *jehad* or holy war. Every one whose judgement was worth anything condemned the policy. Bentinck, Elphinstone, Wellesley were unanimous against it, and the Duke of Wellington in prophetic words declared that the consequence of crossing the Indus to settle a government in Afghanistan would be a 'perennial march into that country'. Finally, even such poor excuse as the framers of the policy originally had was swept away by the course of events before they were finally committed to it. The Russian government, under pressure from London, disowned and recalled its agents. Their emissary at Kabul returned to St. Petersburg and shot himself in chagrin and despair. The Shah of Persia, alarmed by a British expedition to Karrack in the Persian Gulf, raised the siege of Herat September 9, 1838, and withdrew to his own country. The danger from Russian intrigues had thus completely passed away, and a golden bridge was built for a retreat from an untenable position. But the Governor-General and his supporters were now infatuated with their scheme, and talked glibly of the proposed invasion of one of the most difficult countries in the world for military operations as a *promenade militaire*. On October 1, 1838, Lord Auckland issued a minute justifying his policy, in which, according to the severe but not unmerited verdict of Sir Herbert Edwardes, 'the views and conduct of Dost Muhammad Khan were misrepresented with a hardihood which a Russian statesman might have envied'.

The history of the campaign must be briefly told. The 'Army of the Indus' mobilized at Ferozepore. Ranjit Singh objected to the passage of the British force through his territories. It was therefore decided that the Sikh expedition, accompanied by Shah Shuja's son, should invade Afghanistan from the Punjab through the Khyber Pass, while the main British army under Sir John Keane and Sir Willoughby Cotton, accompanied by Shah Shuja himself, entered by the Bolan Pass after traversing Sind. Macnaghten, as envoy and minister to Shah Shuja's court, had political charge of the expedition with Captain, now Sir Alexander, Burnes, as his chief lieutenant. One political crime leads inevitably to others, and the passage through Sind was in flagrant violation of a treaty lately made with the Amirs of that country, but our relations with those unfortunate chieftains will be dealt with later. After much difficulty and loss of baggage animals through the failure of fodder, the army emerged from the Bolan Pass in March. Kandahar was occupied in April, and Ghazni taken by storm in July. Dost Muhammad evacuated Kabul, and in August 1839 Shah Shuja was triumphantly conducted into his capital. So far success had attended the expedition, and a shower of honours fell upon the civil and military services. Auckland received an earldom, Sir John Keane, the Commander-in-Chief, a peerage, and Macnaghten a baronetcy. But this fair prospect was soon overclouded. Ranjit Singh died in June, before the object of the expedition was attained. It was only his iron hand and strong personality that had kept the Sikh misls united, and his death seriously endangered the British communications, for the Sikhs were soon in a state of disaffection. Later in the same year (November) the complete failure of a Russian expedition to Khiva showed how exaggerated had been the dread of Russia that inspired the policy of the war.

It soon became apparent that Shah Shuja depended

entirely on the support of British bayonets. The mere fact that he was imposed on the country from outside had alienated all popular support. The cost of the English army of occupation was excessive, and a serious dilemma presented itself. The British must either withdraw, when Shah Shuja's power would collapse like a house of cards, or, if he were to be maintained upon his throne, they must remain permanently in the country at a ruinous cost to the Indian treasury. So hostile was the feeling of the people that it was found impossible to evacuate the country, even after Dost Muhammad had surrendered himself in 1840 and been sent an honoured prisoner to Calcutta.

Probably the best way out of a bad business would have been to withdraw with Shah Shuja on the ground that he was found unacceptable to his subjects; but this would have been tantamount to a confession that the whole policy was a failure. The result was the adoption of an unfortunate half-way course. It was decided for the time to leave the troops quartered in Afghanistan, and to economize as much as possible by cutting down the stipends paid to the chiefs of eastern Afghanistan by the government to maintain communications with India. The natural result followed that the chiefs became contumacious and closed the passes.

Constant outbreaks all over the country showed that the situation was growing rapidly worse. The loose morals of some of the British officers quartered at Kabul stirred up a fierce and abiding resentment in the minds of the townsmen. Two fatal mistakes were committed by the British: the first was the appointment of General Elphinstone, a brave but old and incapable officer in bad health, to the command of the troops in Kabul. For this most calamitous step Lord Auckland was directly responsible, for he acted in opposition to the advice of the Commander-in-Chief, who wished to appoint General Nott, the commander at Kandahar, a vigorous soldier. Secondly, by an act of supreme folly, the

palace-citadel of Kabul known as the Bala Hissar was given up to Shah Shuja for his seraglio, and the troops were cantoned in a plain exposed to attack on every side and separated from their provisions and stores. By the autumn of 1841 the country was seething with rebellion and intrigue, but the leaders remained blind to what was patent to many of their subordinates. The fertile brain of Macnaghten had been busy with schemes to acquire Herat and even to send expeditions against the Sikhs. In November he was preparing to leave Afghanistan to take up the government of Bombay, and Burnes, who was to succeed him as envoy at Kabul, congratulated him on leaving the country 'in a state of profound tranquillity'. The next day Burnes's house was surrounded by a howling mob, and he was dragged out and cut to pieces, while the British forces a mile and a half away, under the inefficient leadership of Elphinstone, made no attempt to interfere till too late. Then follows a miserable and almost incredible record of British incapacity and Afghan treachery. The military leaders were at variance with each other and with Macnaghten. Appeals were sent to General Sale at Gandamak and General Nott at Kandahar to come to the rescue. But Sale, finding he had not sufficient transport, preferred to fall back on Jalalabad to keep open communications with India, and Nott declared, with apparently good reason, that the march to Kabul through the snow was impossible. The British force abandoned at Kabul committed every conceivable blunder. Elphinstone allowed his stores to be captured without striking a blow, and Macnaghten, fearing starvation, concluded a humiliating treaty on December 11. He engaged that the British should evacuate Afghanistan, that Dost Muhammad should be set free, and Shah Shuja be given the choice of accompanying the British or remaining in Afghanistan with a pension. Akbar Khan, son of Dost Muhammad, was to escort the army to the frontiers. A few days later Mac-

naghten, distrusting Akbar Khan, was drawn into some questionable negotiations with rival chiefs. He was betrayed by them, enticed to an interview with Akbar Khan, and assassinated.

In spite of this a renewed treaty for withdrawal was made with the Afghan chiefs, though Major Eldred Pottinger earnestly pleaded that all negotiations with them should be abandoned, and that the army should either seize the Bala Hissar and hold out till succour came, or cut their way through, sword in hand, to Jalalabad where Sale was gallantly holding out. But neither of these, the only possible or even honourable courses, was adopted. On January 6, after giving up many of their stores and guns, the British forces and camp followers, in all 16,000 men, began their retreat, relying on the assistance of Akbar Khan, who proved quite unwilling or unable to protect them from the attacks of the Ghilzais and other tribesmen who swarmed round the line of route. From the beginning there was a complete failure to take the most ordinary precautions to maintain order or discipline. The generals lost their heads and the troops their *morale*. After a time the women and children and many of the officers, including Pottinger and Elphinstone himself, were surrendered as hostages to Akbar Khan. The rest struggled on in misery and privation through snow-storms and a constant hail of bullets. The retreat became a rout, the rout a massacre. No pen can do justice to the ghastly horrors of the final struggle. The last despairing stand was made at the Pass of Jagdalak, when twelve officers laid down their lives. One man, Dr. Brydon, half dead with wounds and exhaustion, staggered into Jalalabad—with the exception of about 120 prisoners in the hands of Akbar Khan, the sole survivor of 16,000 men who had set out from Kabul a week before.

It is not surprising that Lord Auckland, the man mainly responsible, was shattered and unnerved by this appalling

calamity. He steeled himself to speak of it in a p
tion as a 'partial reverse', and as affording 'a new
for displaying the stability and vigour of the British p
but in fact he could only suggest the withdrawal of S
Peshawar. His subordinates did what they could f
restoration of British prestige. The first relief force u
Wyld, after entering the Khyber and capturing the fort of
Ali Musjid, was forced to fall back. General Pollock, an able officer, was sent to Peshawar, but had not started on his quest to relieve Jalalabad when Auckland laid down the reins of office. Lord Ellenborough, the new Governor-General, came to India with a considerable reputation, and was undoubtedly a much abler man than his predecessor. As President of the Board of Control, an office he held on three occasions, he had shown vigour and decision of character. He was a ready and eloquent speaker of a somewhat florid type, self-confident, impulsive, and rather headstrong, so that even his friend the Duke of Wellington found it necessary to warn him of the need of 'caution and temper'.

As soon as he arrived in India he announced that the British government would no longer 'peril its armies, and with its armies the Indian Empire', to support the Tripartite Treaty. Its aim rather was now to save the troops in Afghanistan and inflict 'some signal and decisive blow' on the enemy. But within a month the defeat of General England at Hakalzai and Palmer's surrender of Ghazni caused him to falter in his resolution. Impulsively he determined on immediate evacuation without any attempt at reprisals or even the rescue of the prisoners still in the hands of the Afghans. Nott was ordered to abandon Kandahar, Pollock to withdraw to Peshawar. The order fell upon the army, as Outram said, 'like a thunderclap', for the position in Afghanistan had greatly improved. Pollock had marched through the Khyber on April 5, the

same day on which the wretched Shah Shuja fell by the hand of an assassin; he reached Jalalabad ten days later to find that the 'illustrious garrison', as Ellenborough named it, had already sallied forth and defeated the besieging army in a pitched battle, while Nott had more than held his own at Kandahar. Neither Pollock nor Nott made any movement to obey the order for retirement, but pleaded lack of transport as a pretext for delay. In India there was an outburst of indignation, and Ellenborough saw he had made a mistake. Too much has perhaps been made of an error of judgement on the part of a Governor-General who had to decide a most difficult question before he had been a month in the country or had mastered the facts. But Ellenborough had ostentatiously refused to listen to the advice of experts, and he made things worse by his ill-advised endeavours to reverse the order while maintaining a verbal consistency. In July he repeated the order for a withdrawal from Afghanistan, but suggested to Nott that if he considered it feasible he was to 'retreat' to India, not by the Bolan Pass, but by Ghazni and Kabul through the Khyber, while Pollock was given leave to co-operate with him. A glance at the map reveals the rather puerile equivocation of the Governor-General's phraseology, and his critics were quick to note that the responsibility of making the decision was ungenerously thrown upon the shoulders of the generals. They, however, were glad enough to bear it. Pollock marched out of Jalalabad on August 20, defeated the Afghans at Jagdalak and Tezin, and planted the British flag once more on the Bala Hissar on September 16. The next day he was joined by Nott, who on his route had destroyed the fortifications at Ghazni, and brought away by Ellenborough's express orders the gates of the tomb of Mahmud of Ghazni which the conqueror was supposed to have carried off from the famous temple of Somnath in Gujarat in A. D. 1024. The European prisoners, who had been hurried by their guards

from place to place, were rescued: by an inexcusable [illegible] vandalism the great Bazaar of Kabul was blown up, and the city, after being sacked, was evacuated on October 12. The Governor-General met the returning troops in a great camp at Ferozepore with triumphal arches and histrionic paeans of victory. In a bombastic proclamation he announced to the Princes of India that 'our victorious army bears the gates of the temple of Somnath in triumph from Afghanistan and the despoiled tomb of Mahmud looks on the ruins of Ghazni. The insult of 800 years is avenged'. But the Muhammadans were only offended by this amazing fustian, and the Hindus had forgotten their ancient history, while antiquarians unkindly pointed out that the gates were much later in date than the eleventh century. In the end 'this glorious trophy of successful war', to quote the famous proclamation, was consigned to a lumber-room in the fort at Agra, and the British in India were left with the exasperating conviction that the Governor-General had only made himself and them slightly ridiculous in the eyes of the world. Dost Muhammad was released, and, making his way back to Afghanistan, soon re-established his power. His subsequent career was destined to show how futile had been the sacrifice of 20,000 lives and the waste of fifteen millions sterling.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE ANNEXATION OF SIND UNDER LORD ELLENBOROUGH

THE conquest of Sind followed in the wake of the Afghan war and was morally and politically its sequel.

Sind is the name given to the country lying on both sides of the Indus south of the Punjab and extending to the sea. The river gives it life and fertility, but it is surrounded on both sides to the east and west by barren and arid deserts. Sind had successively acknowledged the sway of the Mughals, made submission to Persia under Nadir Shah, and after his death owed for a time allegiance to Afghanistan.

Since the end of the eighteenth century the country was ruled by a number of chieftains or Amirs, of the Talpura tribe, coming originally from Baluchistan. The most important were seated at Khaipur, Mirpur, and Hyderabad; and the first of these claimed a vague suzerainty over the others.

The British in India had for many years looked with longing eyes on the Indus river, but an early factory established at Tatta had been abandoned. A treaty was made with the Amirs in 1809 (renewed in 1820) that they should not permit any settlement of 'the tribe of the French' in their country. But Sind remained practically unexplored by Europeans till Burnes in 1831, as already mentioned, made his way up the Indus on his passage to Lahore. 'Alas', said a Seiad, 'Sind is now gone since the English have seen the river'. The foreboding proved all too true. In 1831 Ranjit Singh proposed to Lord William Bentinck the

partition of Sind between himself and the Company, a suggestion which the Governor-General of course refused even to discuss. Instead, in 1832, the Amirs very reluctantly agreed to a treaty (renewed in 1834) that the rivers and roads of Sind should be open to 'the merchants and traders' of Hindustan, but that no armed vessels or military stores should pass through the country. Another article, which showed the vivid fear of British absorption felt by the Amirs, ran, 'that the two contracting parties bind themselves never to look with the eye of covetousness on the possessions of each other'.

During the years 1834 to 1836 Ranjit Singh was again contemplating the conquest of Sind, which obviously lay at his mercy. The Indian government practically took the Amirs under its protection by warning the Sikh ruler that he could not be allowed to seize the country. In return for this service the British considered, perhaps fairly, that they had a right to make conditions with the Amirs favourable to themselves, and they wrested a very reluctant consent from them in 1838 to the admission of a British Resident at Hyderabad. Unfortunately they did not stop there: under Auckland and his cabinet of secretaries British policy in India had fallen to a lower level of unscrupulousness than ever before; and the plain fact is that the treatment of Sind from this time onward, however expedient politically, was morally indefensible.

On the outbreak of the Afghan war it was determined, in flagrant violation of the treaty of 1832, that the British forces should march through Sind. The Indian government appear to have held that they could legally amend a treaty by the formal announcement to the weaker party that they intended to violate one of its provisions. Accordingly the Amirs were informed that 'while the present exigency lasts . . . the article of the treaty prohibiting the use of the Indus for the conveyance of military stores must necessarily be

suspended'. Further, a demand was made for a large sum in commutation of Shah Shuja's claims for tribute, which the Amirs had naturally ceased to pay during his thirty years exile from Kabul. Upon this the Amirs produced signed and sealed releases from all further claims given them by Shah Shuja himself in 1833. 'How this is to be got over', said the British Resident, 'I do not myself see'; but Auckland was not so easily baffled; the money was exacted and the unfortunate Amirs under threat of an advance upon Hyderabad were forced to enter into a new treaty in February 1839, by which they were required to pay three lakhs a year for a subsidiary force to be kept in their country; they were also informed that 'neither the ready power to crush and annihilate them nor the will to call it into action were wanting, if it appeared requisite however remotely for the safety and integrity of the Anglo-Indian Empire or frontier'. Such a brutal assertion of the doctrine that might is right is, fortunately for our national credit, unique in the annals of British administration in India. Even this treaty, however, after being accepted by the Amirs, was arbitrarily revised by Auckland and his advisers in their own favour, and returned to the Sind chieftains for signature, who 'objected, implored, and finally gave way'.[1]

During the Afghan war Sind was the British base of operations both for the original invasion and the reconquest of the country. The Amirs on the whole faithfully kept their agreements with us, and the fearful disasters that fell upon our army did not tempt them to any acts of hostility. Certain vague charges of disaffection were however made, based on evidence now generally recognized to have been unsatisfactory. Even if true, it would have been in accordance with the traditions of British rule in India to condone them, for the Amirs had received considerable provocation,

[1] *The History of the British Empire in India.* By Edward Thornton, vol. vi, p. 411.

and Lord Ellenborough himself declared that it was i
sible to believe they could entertain friendly feelings tc
us. Unfortunately, the settlement was not left to Ou
the Resident at Hyderabad, who thoroughly knew the
and was personally liked by them, but to Sir Charles N
who was sent to Sind with full civil and military pow
September 1842. Napier was a brilliant general, ha
combining the virtues of daring and caution, but he
impulsive, hot-headed, and extremely combative. He promptly announced to the Amirs that he considered the charges made against them had been substantiated and that he was authorized to revise the subsidiary treaty of 1839. The new terms submitted, or rather forced upon them, were that cessions of territory should be made in place of the tribute of three lakhs to maintain the subsidiary force, that the Amirs should provide fuel for British steamers navigating the Indus and should cease to exercise the privilege of coining. Money was henceforward to be issued by the British government and to bear on one side the 'effigy of the sovereign of England'. This last provision was naturally looked upon by the Amirs as a complete surrender of their national rights, and it is probable enough that from this time onward they only prolonged negotiations with a view to taking up arms at a favourable time. Before, however, the Amirs had accepted the treaty, Napier sequestrated the territory in question, and by his proclamations acted as though Sind had passed under his jurisdiction. To intimidate the Amirs, he took the amazing course of marching, without any declaration of war, upon Imangarh, a famous desert fortress, and razing it to the ground. The Amirs were induced by Outram to sign the treaties lest worse should befall them. They did so, but earnestly warned him to leave Hyderabad, as they would not be answerable for the temper of their countrymen. Their warning was fulfilled three days later, when a fierce mob

attacked the Residency and compelled Outram after a gallant defence to take refuge on a steamer. Open war now ensued, and on February 17, at Miani, Napier by brilliant generalship utterly defeated an army of 30,000 men with a force of less than 3,000, inflicting on them a loss of 5,000 in killed and wounded. Hyderabad fell, and a month later another victory was won at Daba over the Amir of Khaipur. Though there was still fighting to be done, the war was now practically over. No one has ever successfully defended on moral grounds British policy in regard to Sind. It is difficult to believe, as Mr. Innes says, 'that the case for annexation was not more or less deliberately manufactured'.[1] An able and ambitious general, eager for distinction, and impatiently believing that the undoubted benefits of British rule justified almost any means of extending it, brought the rough-hewn ready-made solution of the soldier to bear on an intricate administrative problem. He was allowed to dictate the policy and was supported by the Governor-General against the high authority and considered protests of one of the most capable and best informed of the Company's servants. Sir James Outram remonstrated against the whole business as unjustifiable, and refused to touch a single rupee of the plunder of Hyderabad, which brought Sir Charles Napier £70,000. The Court of Directors condemned the policy, and Sir John Hobhouse, President of the Board of Control, afterwards declared that Ellenborough himself would not have given his approval had he known all the facts. Nor indeed is there need to seek laboriously for an ethical justification, since the author of the policy cynically abandoned the defensive position. Sir Charles Napier only saw that the government of the Amirs was weak and inefficient. He conscientiously believed that British administration would confer incalculable blessings on the country and was really

[1] *A Short History of the British in India.* By A. D. Innes.

indifferent how many legal, technical, and even
considerations he swept away in benefiting the pec
Sind against their will. He was gifted with a grim h
which disdained to employ political euphemisms fo
drastic benevolence. Besides his sardonic pun in an
ing his victory to Ellenborough ('peccavi', i.e. 'I have
we have the admissions in his Diary, 'We have no r
seize Sind, yet we shall do so, and a very advanta
useful, humane piece of rascality it will be. . . . My p
position is not however to my liking: we had no right to
come here, and are tarred with the Afghan brush.'[1] Sind
was annexed in August 1843 and the Amirs were sent into
exile. The country was pacified and settled by Sir Charles
Napier, who in this field for his talents displayed an energy
and ability that were altogether admirable.

Ellenborough's action in Gwalior, though it did not err
on the side of indulgence to the susceptibilities of a feuda-
tory chief, is far more capable of justification. At least
there he sought no territory and was confronted with a
grave menace to British sovereignty. At the end of the
Maratha war of 1818, Sindhia had been left the most
powerful of the Maratha chiefs; he possessed from that
time the only really formidable native army south of the
Sutlaj. Daulat Rao Sindhia had died in 1827, and in 1843
a minor was on the throne; the Regent, approved by Lord
Ellenborough, was dismissed from office by the youthful
widow of the late ruler, and a characteristic scene of intrigue
and counter-intrigue followed, which seemed only too likely
to end in civil war. The great danger lay in the condition
of the army; it consisted of over 40,000 men, a force far
too large for the needs of a feudatory state, and in the strife
of factions its influence was plainly increasing and becoming
predominant in the government. Formidable as it was,

[1] *The Life and Opinions of General Sir C. J. Napier.* Ed. by Sir W. Napier, vol. ii, pp. 218, 290.

Ellenborough would not have interfered had he not clearly foreseen that a Sikh war was imminent. In September 1843 the Sikh Maharaja was assassinated. Palace revolutions quickly followed; there too the army of the Khalsa was obviously calling the policy of the state, and was on the verge of an outbreak. Ellenborough decided that he could not run the risk of these two disorderly armies fraternizing in the future. He proclaimed that the Company could not permit 'the existence within the territories of Sindhia of an unfriendly government nor that those territories should be without a government willing and able to maintain order'. The British, who had held themselves so lightly bound by treaty obligations in the business of Sind, suddenly developed an extreme punctiliousness even in regard to obsolete conventions. Ellenborough unexpectedly appealed to Lord Wellesley's treaty with Sindhia of 1804 establishing a subsidiary force, which had remained a dead letter from the day it was signed and been ignored in subsequent diplomatic relations. Two British armies advanced on the Chambal, though Ellenborough assumed that peaceful negotiations could still settle the question at issue. But the Gwalior army took matters into its own hands. It prevented a meeting between the Governor-General and the rulers of the state, and fought two battles with the British forces on December 29, 1843. At Maharajpur, north of Gwalior, Sir Hugh Gough, not anticipating resistance, came upon the enemy unexpectedly. There was no room for generalship, but by sheer hard fighting the victory was won. The enemy lost 3,000 killed and wounded, but the British losses also were severe, amounting to 797; on the same day a second and less costly victory was won by General Grey at Paniar.

The results were important. For though the dominions of Sindhia were left entire, Gwalior was now definitely made a protected state, and as the ruler at the time was a minor,

this practically meant that for the next ten years the country was under British administration, the native council of regency being bound to follow the advice of the Resident. The army, thoroughly cowed by its two severe defeats, was cut down to 9,000 men, and a British contingent of 10,000 was enlisted. Thus by Lord Ellenborough's foresight the danger of a union between disaffected armies from Gwalior and Lahore was at an end. Strangely enough, in the year of the Mutiny, while Sindhia and the native army under the guidance of his famous minister Dinkar Rao remained loyal, the British contingent mutinied, murdered its officers, and inflicted a severe defeat on General Windham at Cawnpore in November 1857. Lord Ellenborough returning in triumph to Calcutta was astounded to receive the news that the Directors, exercising their constitutional right for the first time, had ordered his recall. They thoroughly distrusted his erratic genius: the tone of his dispatches had offended them: they most justly disapproved of the policy in Sind, and they accused him of systematically subordinating the interests of the civil to those of the military service. On his return he was elevated to an earldom.

CHAPTER XXVII

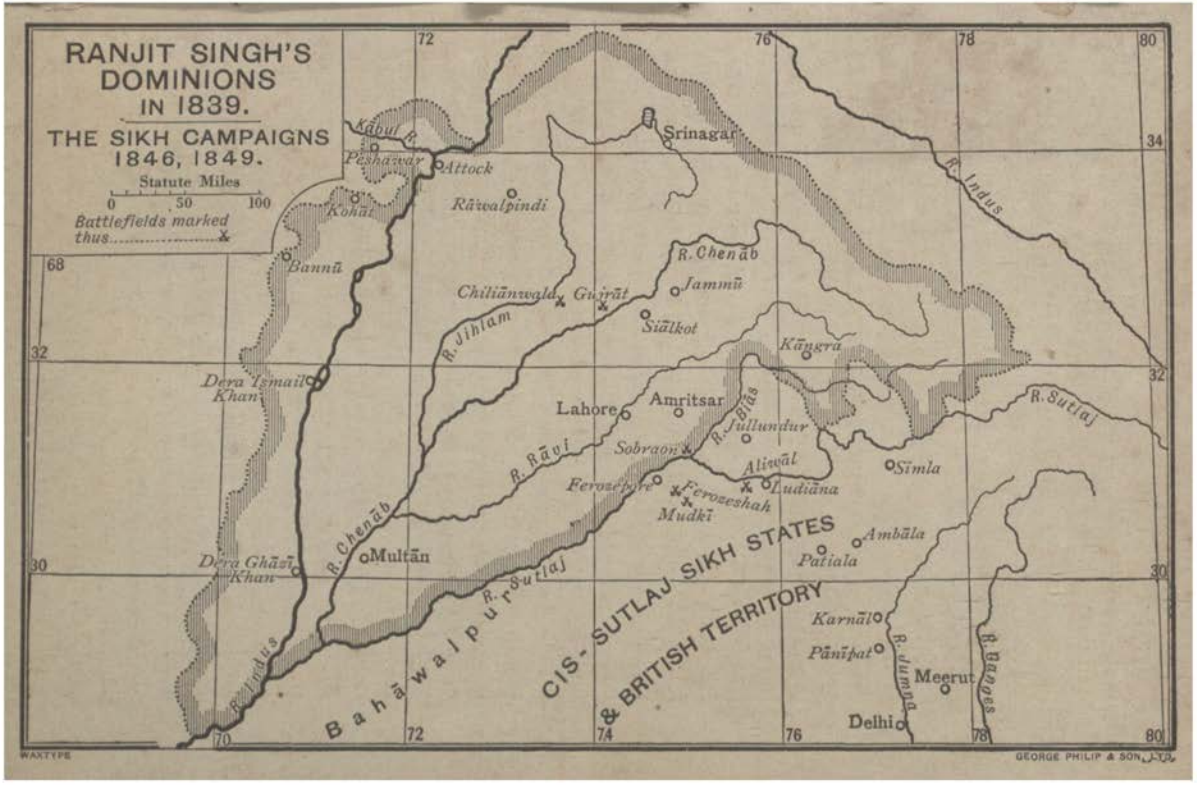
THE FIRST AND SECOND SIKH WARS AND THE CONQUEST OF THE PUNJAB. LORD HARDINGE AND LORD DALHOUSIE

LORD ELLENBOROUGH, who could at least take long views, had foreseen that a Sikh war was inevitable in the near future, and the Directors, though they did not desire that he should wage it, probably recognized that hostilities could not long be postponed, for on the suggestion of the Duke of Wellington they appointed to succeed him Sir Henry Hardinge, a Peninsular veteran in his sixtieth year.

Since the death of Ranjit Singh in June 1839, the state of the Punjab had been one of chronic revolution; all real power was in the hands of the Khalsa army, which overawed the nominal rulers at Lahore through its delegates the *Panchayats* or Committees of five, who somewhat resembled the 'Agitators' of the Roundhead army in the English Civil War. A dismal series of revolutions and assassinations followed, the army in turn setting up and deposing those members of the royal house who bid highest for its favour. So helpless were these puppet princes that in 1841 Sher Singh, who was then seated on the unsteady Sikh throne, implored the help of Lord Auckland against his seditious soldiery. Rajas and ministers were murdered in quick succession. The army even drove away over the frontier Court and Avitabile, the European captains who had given them their wonderful coherence and discipline. Finally, in 1845, the army acknowledged the claims of Dulip Singh, a reputed son of

their great chieftain, a child of five, whose mother the Rani, an able, intriguing, and licentious woman—the Messalina of the North, as Hardinge called her—acted nominally as regent, aided by her favourite minister and paramour Lal Singh. Though she courted and fawned upon the army she dreaded its absolute and capricious power, and looked for her only hope of security in urging it on to challenge British supremacy. Either it would spend its superabundant energies in a career of conquest and the sovereignty of Hindustan would pass to the Sikhs, or it would be shattered in the conflict and she could then make her own peace with the offended British nation. Her position could hardly be worse and might conceivably be bettered. This—the main feature of the first Sikh war—must constantly be borne in mind.' The leaders were half-hearted or even treacherous, fearing victory almost as much as defeat. We were fighting against a fine army without a general, or, at any rate, without one supreme controlling mind.

On December 13, 1845, the Sikhs began to cross the Sutlaj. The British commander at Ferozepore made no attempt to dispute the passage, for which at that particular time and place we were inevitably to some extent unprepared. This involves no reflection on British policy. For some years, through the foresight of Ellenborough and Hardinge the frontier had been quietly and gradually strengthened, the army being increased to 40,000 men and 100 guns. Even as it was, some critics were found to aver that the massing and movements of these troops had provoked the war; and yet, had less been done, the opposite accusation of negligence would have been loudly made. To such a dilemma statesmen are always liable to be exposed, when a war long foreshadowed finally breaks out. Strategic counsels of perfection must sometimes be relaxed for political reasons. It was undoubtedly worth while to take some risks and so avoid jeopardizing all chances of peace;


RANJIT SINGH'S DOMINIONS IN 1839.
THE SIKH CAMPAIGNS 1846, 1849.
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0 50 100
Battlefields marked thus
Kabul R.
Peshawar
Attock
Srinagar
R. Indus
Kohat
Rāwalpindi
Bannū
R. Chenāb
Jammū
Chiliānwala
Gujrāt
Siālkot
R. Jihlam
Kāngrā
Dera Ismail Khan
Lahore
Amritsar
R. Sutlaj
R. Bīās
Jullundur
R. Rāvi
Sobraon
Sīmla
Aliwāl
Ferozepore
Ludiāna
Ferozeshah
Mudkī
Ambāla
Dera Ghāzi Khan
Multān
R. Chenāb
Patiala
CIS-SUTLAJ SIKH STATES & BRITISH TERRITORY
Karnāl
Pānīpat
R. Jumna
R. Ganges
Meerut
Delhi
Bahāwalpur
R. Sutlaj
R. Indus
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WAXTYPE
GEORGE PHILIP & SON

for peace need never be despaired of till the first shot is fired in anger.

On the news of the Sikh advance the Governor-General issued a proclamation, declaring all Sikh possessions east of the Sutlaj forfeit, and hurried his forces from Ambala and Ludhiana to save Ferozepore. The first battle was fought at Mudki, December 18, the British under Sir Hugh Gough coming in touch with the enemy somewhat unexpectedly after a march of twenty-two miles. There 'in a stout conflict' during 'an hour and a half of dim starlight' the Sikhs were defeated with the loss of seventeen guns but the British casualties were very heavy, amounting to 872 killed and wounded. Among the dead was General Sir Robert Sale, the defender of Jalalabad. The victorious army then advanced on Ferozeshah, where 35,000 Sikhs under Lall Singh were awaiting them behind strong entrenchments. Though after the battle of Mudki the Governor-General had rather quixotically taken the office of second-in-command under Sir Hugh Gough, he now obliged the latter to delay the attack till Sir John Littler had arrived with reinforcements from Ferozepore—an act of very doubtful wisdom, for the gain in numbers was more than counteracted by the serious loss of time. The battle therefore did not begin till four o'clock of a short winter's day (December 21). A fierce frontal attack was made by the British troops, but two divisions were temporarily repulsed and the entrenchments were only partly carried when it became too dark to continue the fight. The British troops bivouacked on the battlefield, having lost touch with one another and being still exposed to a spasmodic and harassing fire from the enemy's batteries. During that 'night of horrors', as the Commander-in-Chief acknowledged, 'we were in a critical and perilous state', and there is no doubt that the British army came within an ace of a ruinous defeat. But fortunately there was dissension in

the Sikh ranks through the treacherous conduct of their leader, and when the dawn of December 22 came a determined rush finally carried the entrenchments. Even so the danger was not past, for a fresh Sikh army under Tej Singh appeared, but after making a reconnaissance in force he retired, not realizing that the British soldiers were fasting, worn out with fatigue, and almost destitute of ammunition. The British losses amounted to 694 killed, including 103 officers, and 1,721 wounded. The Sikhs were estimated to have lost 8,000 men, and seventy-three guns were taken.

After this severe defeat the Sikhs retreated across the Sutlaj, but finding that the British, who were waiting for heavy guns and ammunition to be brought up from Delhi, did not follow them, they recrossed the river, and one of their divisions made a dash on Ludhiana. Sir Harry Smith (afterwards Governor of Cape Colony) was sent to intercept them, and, after suffering a check at Buddewal, brilliantly defeated them at the battle of Aliwal on January 28, 1846. He captured sixty-seven guns and drove the Sikhs in full rout back across the Sutlaj.

The final battle was fought on February 10 at Sobraon, a village on the British bank of the river. The Sikhs had constructed a position of extraordinary strength, and hoped to secure a retreat, if necessary, by a bridge of boats in their rear. After a fierce artillery duel lasting two hours, the Sikh position was carried by storm, though only through fighting of the most desperate description. The bridge of boats collapsed under the weight of the flying Sikh regiments, and a fearful scene of slaughter and vengeance ensued; nearly ten thousand of the enemy were shot down by grape and shrapnel in the bed of the river, which ran red with blood, the British soldiers, infuriated by the mutilation of their dead in former battles, refusing to heed the cries for quarter. Our own

losses were again very severe, amounting to 2,383 killed and wounded.

The army of the Khalsa was now vanquished, but the campaign had been a revelation. The magnificent fighting qualities of the Sikhs, and their skill as gunners and engineers, were for the first time appreciated. The war had lasted but fifty-four days, but during that time there had been four pitched battles—the fiercest and most desperately contested that British troops in India had ever been called upon to fight. Criticisms were, perhaps inevitably, passed on British strategy in the campaign. Gough was said to have been too fond of frontal attacks and not to have reconnoitred sufficiently the Sikh positions; but if British losses were heavy, the battles were proportionately decisive, and the Indian army, with rather a low proportion of European troops, was meeting the finest fighting force it had ever encountered.

Hardinge entered the capital, Lahore. The Sikhs by their absolutely unprovoked violation of British territory could have looked for little else than the complete loss of their independence. But Hardinge stopped short of the annexation of the Punjab for two reasons; in the first place respect was paid to the memory of Ranjit Singh, the old and faithful ally of Great Britain; and secondly, the Governor-General doubted whether he was strong enough to occupy the whole country. Shorn of some of their territory, and limited as to the size of the regular army they might maintain, the Sikhs were given one more chance to preserve their national existence. By the treaty of peace concluded in March 1846, all Sikh territories to the left of the Sutlaj, with the Jullundur Doab (the land between the Sutlaj and the Bias), were given up. An indemnity of one and a half millions was to be paid, or Kashmir ceded with half a million, and the latter alternative was the one actually accepted by the Sikhs. Kashmir was then handed over to Golab Singh,

Raja of Jammu, a Sikh chief who had been neutral in the war, for one million sterling. The army was henceforward to be limited to 20,000 infantry and 12,000 cavalry. Such were the penal clauses of the treaty. An attempt had now to be made to support the government of the little Maharaja, and it was agreed that a British force should occupy the capital, Lahore, till the close of the year, during the reconstruction of the government. Colonel Henry Lawrence was left behind as Resident, with Lall Singh as first minister. The Governor-General, now Viscount Hardinge, and the Commander-in-Chief, now Lord Gough, marched back in triumph to Calcutta with 250 captured Sikh guns to impress upon the peoples of India how severe had been the defeats inflicted upon the army of the Khalsa.

But the political position in the Punjab was still critical. Fortunately, Henry Lawrence by his sympathetic administration and personality won a wonderful influence over many of the Sirdars, or chieftains, though he was from the first opposed and thwarted by the court party headed and instigated by the Queen Mother. Lall Singh was soon found to have been concerned in a treacherous attack on the Raja of Kashmir, and his dismissal was found necessary. The friendly Sirdars themselves petitioned that the British garrison should not be removed at the end of the year, or the army of the Khalsa would again assert itself.

As a result, a new treaty was signed in December 1846 setting up a Regency Council of eight Sirdars, and maintaining British garrisons in the country for eight years till the Maharaja came of age. Henry Lawrence was to preside over the Council, and therefore was in fact the ruler of the Punjab, a position of magnificent responsibility. He gathered under him a famous staff of frontier officers, his brothers George and John Lawrence, Abbott, Edwardes, Hodson, Nicholson, and Lumsden, and entered upon that wonderful work of civilizing the Punjab, which was to be

finally completed under British sway. A crusade was made against *Sati*, female infanticide, punishment by mutilation, and all the other abuses of Sikh rule. The burden of the land revenue was lightened and vexatious customs dues were abolished. But though these reforms brought relief to the common people, they were unpopular with the Sirdars. The Queen Mother supported the national and anti-foreign party with intrigues and plots, and it was found necessary in August 1847 to remove her from Lahore. The remnant of the Khalsa army looked sullenly on, still unconvinced of its inferiority to British troops and attributing its late defeats to the treachery of its leaders. Revolt would probably have come sooner or later in any case; it was possibly hastened by the temporary withdrawal of Lawrence, who returned to England for a hard-won holiday in January 1848. Lord Hardinge returned with him. His short administration had been almost wholly concerned with affairs in the Punjab. But he had won laurels not only as a conqueror but as an economist, and after the war he had carried out bold reductions in the army, 50,000 infantry being disbanded on the ground that the formidable forces of Gwalior and the Punjab had been vanquished and broken.

The Earl of Dalhousie landed at Calcutta in January 1848. He was in his thirty-sixth year, the youngest Governor-General that had hitherto held office. He had won a considerable reputation as President of the Board of Trade, but his great mental qualities were as yet known to few. Whether for good or ill, he was destined to leave a deeper personal impress on the destinies of India than any of his predecessors since Lord Wellesley. At the very beginning he was highly tried, for within three months of his arrival Hardinge's policy of 'experimental forbearance' in leaving the Sikhs a partial autonomy had broken down, and the Punjab was aflame with rebellion. The national party among the Sikh chieftains, as we have seen,

had long been viewing with impatient and ill-concealed distrust the beneficent—but to them unpalatable—results of British influence. The first outbreak occurred at Multan in the south-west of the Punjab, where the Sikh Governor, Mulraj, took up arms, after his followers, probably with his complicity, had barbarously murdered two young British officers. Although Mulraj proclaimed a religious war and summoned all true Sikhs to flock to his banner, Dalhousie decided on the advice of Lord Gough, who was in this case unusually cautious, that operations must be postponed till the cold weather. Most authorities have held that, had Henry Lawrence been at Lahore and Lord Hardinge at Calcutta, troops would have been moved up at once and the insurrection would probably have spread no further. It was, however, a very difficult point for a Governor-General to decide, who had only been three months in the country, and had not yet made himself so absolutely conversant with Indian affairs as he afterwards became. It is permissible to surmise that a year later Dalhousie, with his prompt and masterful will, would have overruled the Commander-in-Chief instead of supporting him. There was, however, a good political reason for inaction, which is sometimes forgotten; it was theoretically the duty of the Sikh government at Lahore to punish Mulraj, who had risen against their authority, and, at any rate, till they proved unable or unwilling to demand reparation for the outrage on British subjects, the British government would legally have no right to interfere.

Though the supreme government therefore rightly for the time withheld its hand, a young lieutenant, Herbert Edwardes, employed under the Sikh Council of Regency, who was engaged in settling some districts beyond the Indus, hastily gathered together what levies he could, and attacked Mulraj, being, as he said himself, 'very like a Scotch terrier barking at a tiger'. He defeated the Sikh

rebel in two engagements and drove him into Multan in July. Dalhousie supported these operations as far as he could, though he had not authorized them. General Whish and Edwardes began a regular siege of Multan, a very strong fortress, on September 7. Meanwhile the revolt throughout the Punjab was gradually spreading. The Maharani was found to be in correspondence with Mulraj and was removed to Benares. The British Resident at Lahore sent Sher Singh with a large force to assist the besieging army, but it went over bodily to the enemy on September 14. The blockading forces were at once withdrawn from the trenches, and the siege was not resumed for three months. At Lahore the Resident maintained his position with difficulty. The old soldiers of the Khalsa flocked everywhere to join Sher Singh, and the Sikh leaders entered into alliance with Dost Muhammad, the Amir of Afghanistan, once their bitterest foe, buying his aid by the surrender of Peshawar.

The rising had now become a national one, and the British government were warranted in meeting it with all their power. On October 10 the Governor-General made his famous declaration that, 'unwarned by precedent, uninfluenced by example, the Sikh nation has called for war, and on my word, Sirs, they shall have it with a vengeance'. For the moment however, of necessity action lagged behind these brave words. It was not till November 16 that Lord Gough crossed the Ravi. Six days later, having attacked Sher Singh at Ramnagar on the Chenab with characteristic impetuosity, he fought a drawn battle. In January he advanced to the River Jihlam, and on the 13th attacked the Sikh army, 30,000 in number, entrenched in a magnificent position where our cavalry had little room to manœuvre. The battle of Chilianwala has been graphically, if somewhat unfairly, described as 'an evening battle fought by a brave old man in a passion'. It was long believed that the Com-

mander-in-Chief, angered at being fired upon by the Sikh gunners, gave up his original intention of a reconnaissance and a flank movement on the morrow, and ordered a frontal attack. His tactics were almost unanimously condemned at the time, and Dalhousie in a private letter to the President of the Board of Control wrote, 'the conduct of this action is beneath the criticism even of a militiaman like myself'.[1] Mr. R. S. Rait, in his recent biography of Lord Gough, claims to have shown on the evidence of his subject's diary and correspondence that there was no sudden change of plan, and that the story of his 'Irish blood' being roused by bullets falling near him is apocryphal. He also contends, though here no doubt his defence is more open to question, that the alteration in the Sikh formation made it impossible to retreat and unsafe to encamp, and that the mistakes in the battle were due to subordinates.[2] Wherever the responsibility lay, mistakes were undoubtedly made. The result of the battle was that, though the Sikhs after a desperate resistance abandoned their lines, they only retreated three miles in good order with the loss of twelve guns; on the other hand, a British brigade was repulsed with fearful loss, four guns captured, the colours of three regiments taken, and some cavalry squadrons disgracefully routed. British losses in killed and wounded amounted to 2,357 men and eighty-nine officers.

The account of the battle made a painful impression at home, and Sir Charles Napier was hurried out to supersede Lord Gough as Commander-in-Chief; but before he could arrive the latter rehabilitated his reputation and ended the war by a brilliant stroke. The battle of Gujrat, 'the battle of the guns', was fought on February 22. The Sikh army

[1] *The Life of the Marquis of Dalhousie.* By Sir William Lee-Warner, vol. i, p. 188.

[2] *The Life and Campaigns of Hugh, first Viscount Gough*, vol. ii, pp. 211–44.

was 50,000 strong, but this time the position was carefully reconnoitred, and Gough was prevailed upon to make proper use of his artillery. The infantry attack was not delivered till a tremendous bombardment had silenced the Sikh batteries. The enemy was put to flight and a brilliant and relentless pursuit made the battle completely decisive. Meanwhile after a desperate resistance the town of Multan was stormed, and Mulraj, who had retreated to the citadel, was finally forced to surrender at discretion. On March 12 Sher Singh and the remnant of the Khalsa army laid down their arms, and the Afghan forces of Dost Muhammad, which had taken no effective part in the war, were chased back to their hills.

Dalhousie, who received a Marquisate, had next to settle the future of the country. The practical courses of action were first, the re-establishment of the *status quo* before the rising, with possibly the annexation of the province of Multan; secondly, the permanent administration of the country by British officials, the Maharaja maintaining the titular sovereignty only; thirdly, the incorporation of the whole of the Punjab into British dominion. Sir Henry Lawrence and Lord Ellenborough were strongly opposed to annexation, and the Cabinet inclined to their way of thinking, though Dalhousie could get no very clear lead from them. Dalhousie considered that the first course would have given the Sikh nation better terms than they had any right to expect, and would have savoured of weakness on the part of Great Britain. As regards the second, he had no love for those titular pageantries and shadowy sovereignties which had done so much in the past to embarrass British statesmanship; accordingly, on his own responsibility he annexed the whole of the Punjab by proclamation on March 29, 1849—a momentous step which finally carried the frontiers of British India to their natural limits, the base of the mountains of Afghanistan. He endeavoured to meet

the argument that Dulip Singh, being a minor, could not justly be held responsible for the misdeeds of his subjects, by granting him a generous pension of £50,000 a year. The child was given an English education, ultimately embraced Christianity, and lived the life of an English landlord on an estate in Norfolk. The Sikhs submitted to their lot more quietly than any one had anticipated, and as regards the material result the policy of the annexation was abundantly justified.

To settle the new province a Board of three commissioners was set up, consisting of Sir Henry Lawrence as President, his brother John, and Charles Mansel, who was replaced in 1851 by Robert Montgomery. Dalhousie would have preferred a single head, but he felt himself bound not to pass over Sir Henry Lawrence, and though he appreciated his fine and chivalrous character he did not consider him competent to take sole charge. To him was especially entrusted the 'political' work, i.e. negotiations with the chiefs, the disarming of the country, and the levying of the new Sikh regiment. To his brother John was given the settlement of the land revenue, while the third commissioner was mainly concerned with judicial matters. Fifty-six subordinates, the pick of the services, civil and military, formed the staff of the new province, and helped to carry out the settlement of the Punjab, which was destined to be one of the most brilliant administrative achievements of Englishmen in the East. The people were disarmed. A line of fortresses was carried along the north-west frontier. Roads were constructed throughout the province, the most notable being that which connected Lahore with Peshawar—a triumph of engineering skill. Canals were made both for transport and irrigation. The land tax was reduced from a half of the value of the produce to about a quarter. All internal imposts on the transport of goods were swept away. Slavery, thuggee, and dacoity were finally stamped out, and a clear

and simple code of criminal and civil procedure, suited to a primitive political organization, instead of the cumbrous and complicated regulations of the older provinces, was drawn up. The most wonderful tribute to the success of these measures was the material prosperity and the contentment of the people. Within three years of the desperate valour and grim carnage of Chilianwala, Sikh soldiers were fighting for the Company in Burma of their own free will, and, when a little later the Mutiny threatened the existence of British dominions in India and offered to all subject peoples an unequalled opportunity for vengeance on their conquerors, the Punjab never faltered in its loyalty.

The credit for these splendid results must be shared between Lord Dalhousie and his subordinates, but the Governor-General played perhaps the predominant part. Though the plan of a Board was not adopted for that purpose, as was once erroneously supposed, it yet enabled him to inspire the policy of the commissioners and control their work. This was especially the case since there early appeared a cleavage of opinion between the brothers Lawrence. The elder was inclined to favour the Sirdars, or Sikh aristocracy, who were devoted to him personally, and to press on with material improvements regardless of the cost to the revenue. John Lawrence had more sympathy with the peasants than the chieftains, and as guardian of the public purse brought forward many practical objections to his brother's pet schemes. Not till nearly three years had elapsed did these differences prove a serious bar to administration. But early in 1853 the two brothers mutually agreed that it would be better for one of them to go. Dalhousie believing, in spite of Henry's many fine qualities, that John, 'take him all in all', was 'the better man', removed the elder brother, to his deep chagrin, to Rajputana as agent for the Governor-General, abolished the Board that had served its purpose, and made John Lawrence Chief Commissioner of the Punjab.

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE SECOND BURMESE WAR. LORD DALHOUSIE. THE DOCTRINE OF LAPSE

THE second war of Dalhousie's administration was waged on the far eastern frontier. It arose out of his determination to protect the interests of the merchants who, trusting to the Treaty of 1826, had settled on the southern coast of Burma. For some time they had been subject to petty persecutions at the hands of the Governor of Rangoon, who did everything possible to impede their trade, and in 1851 they applied for redress to Calcutta. Dalhousie sent a frigate to Rangoon to demand compensation. Many considered this action needlessly provocative, and even John Lawrence wrote meaningly, 'Why did you send a commodore to Burma if you wanted peace?' while Dalhousie himself afterwards admitted 'these commodores are too combustible for negotiations'.[1] But since the British government had long ceased to maintain a Resident at the court of Ava, owing to the insults to which they were subjected, there was perhaps no other means of showing the Burmese authorities that the matter was one of urgency. Even as it was, they ignored the representations of the commodore and his demands for compensation and fired upon him, when he rather injudiciously detained a royal vessel and proclaimed the blockade of the ports. They thus brought upon themselves the vigorous action of the Governor-General; an

[1] *Life of the Marquis of Dalhousie*, Sir William Lee-Warner, vol. i, pp. 417–18.

ultimatum was sent to the Court of Ava, demanding compensation and an indemnity of £100,000 under threat of war. The home authorities considered the tone of this dispatch too peremptory; but Dalhousie defended it on the ground that 'no Indian potentate would attend to any command conveyed as a European power would word it', and there seems little doubt that he would gladly have avoided what he called the 'mortification of war'. At the same time he was determined, if war should come, that it should be waged before the rains set in. No answer having been vouchsafed to the British ultimatum, Dalhousie pressed on preparations for war with extraordinary energy and thoroughness. He superintended nearly every detail himself, for he was determined that the mistakes and blunders of the first war should not be repeated. The commissariat and transport were thoroughly well organized. Every precaution to ensure the comfort and health of the troops was elaborately thought out. Within eight weeks from the commencement of warlike preparations, the flotilla appeared off Rangoon. Martaban was quickly captured. The great pagoda of Rangoon was stormed on April 14: Bassein fell a month later. The Commander-in-Chief, General Godwin, sent a force to reconnoitre Prome but did not advance thither, fearing to endanger his communications. The Governor-General himself proceeded to Rangoon in September, and determined that Prome should be taken. It was occupied in October; Pegu, already captured but besieged by the Burmese, was finally relieved in November, and military operations were thus concluded. Dalhousie pressed upon the Court of Directors the necessity of annexing the province of Pegu, partly because we could hardly abandon those of the inhabitants of that province, who had gladly welcomed British protection, to the fiendish cruelties of the Burmese. The Court accepted this suggestion, but put him in a difficulty by requiring either that the cession of Pegu

should be regularly made in a treaty, or else that an advance should be made to Ava and the whole country subjugated.

Dalhousie realized that an advance to Ava 600 miles from our base was a chimerical scheme, even had the requisite transport and supplies been forthcoming, which they were not. On the other hand, any treaty with the barbaric court of Ava would be as 'flimsy as the paper on which it is traced'; he therefore took his own strong line, and when his overtures for a treaty produced no response, proclaimed the annexation of Pegu, or Lower Burma, on December 20, 1852. The results completely justified his bold action. Though the Burmese never formally recognized the cession of territory, they were too cowed to resent it in arms. The administration of the new province under Major Arthur Phayre was highly successful; but it was clearly proved that the ceded territory was large enough to tax his energies fully for many years. Granted that Burma was destined ultimately to pass under British sway, it was better, as Dalhousie declared, to take a second bite of the cherry. Dalhousie indeed experienced the usual fate of statesmen in being attacked from either side; for while some thought he had not gone far enough, others considered he had gone much too far; and he and the Court of Directors were roundly trounced for their love of territorial aggrandizement; but all the evidence goes to show that neither the Governor-General nor the home authorities desired annexation for its own sake. The new province extended as far north as Myede fifty miles beyond Prome. Westward it was bounded by the hills of Arakan and eastward roughly by the river Salwen. Independent Burma was now shut off altogether from the sea, and the whole coast-line of the Bay of Bengal from Cape Comorin to the Malay Peninsula passed under British control.

Sir William Lee-Warner has noticed three epochs in British relations with native states, first that of the 'ring

fence' down to 1813, when native states were treated as really foreign and not interfered with; secondly, that of 'subordinate isolation' from 1813 to 1857, when the states were protected but their internal affairs were left entirely to themselves; and thirdly, that of 'subordinate union' from 1857 to the present day, when none are permitted to suffer from the misrule of their chiefs. Now in the first stage the oppressed subjects had at least the remedy of rebellion, in the last they can appeal to the strong arm of the suzerain. In the middle stage they had no redress. The British government often found itself confronted by the unpleasant dilemma of either breaking its agreements with native rulers or allowing their subjects to be down-trodden.

Dalhousie, girding against this state of things, sought a way out and found it in the famous doctrine of 'lapse', the principle of which had been distinctly recognized before his time. It was that independent states or those that owed their very existence to British power, the sovereignty, when the natural heirs of the royal line came to an end, passed back or 'lapsed' to the supreme power. The question, however, was complicated by that of adoption. All childless Hindus were accustomed to adopt sons whose main duty it was to perform those funeral rites without which the dead man would find no rest in the hereafter. Dalhousie claimed, undoubtedly with perfect correctness, that the sovereignty of a ruler could not pass to a son adopted without the consent of the suzerain. He held that, in view of the abuses to which native rule was so fatally liable, 'the British government in the exercise of a wise and sound policy is bound not to put aside or neglect such rightful opportunities of acquiring territory or revenue as may from time to time present themselves, whether they arise from the lapse of subordinate states by the failure of all heirs of every description whatsoever, or from the failure of heirs natural where the succession can be sustained only by the sanction of the

government being given to the ceremony of adoption according to Hindu law. The government is bound, in duty as well as in policy, to act on every such occasion with the purest integrity, and in the most scrupulous observance of good faith. When even a shadow of doubt can be shown, the claim should at once be abandoned.'[1] It must be remembered in the first place that the doctrine was not invented by Dalhousie; the principle at any rate had been recognized as early as 1834: secondly, that he applied it only to dependent states—those which had been avowedly dependencies of some suzerain conquered by Great Britain or had been actually established by her: thirdly, that in applying the doctrine he was animated by compassion for the peoples of the feudatory states as well as by a desire for territorial aggrandizement. It is not true, as has been so often said, that all native states were in danger of falling under British sway; for Dalhousie clearly recognized the right of those rulers, whose sovereignty dated back before the British régime, to adopt heirs freely.

On the other hand it is equally to be remembered that there was some technical difficulty in deciding which states were dependent and which were not, and the Governor-General's decision was sometimes overruled, as in the case of Karauli; secondly, that whatever may have been the facts, the natives did undoubtedly believe that the existence of all native principalities was threatened. As Mr. Innes well says, 'there was fully adequate precedent for every one of his annexations. But his predecessors had acted on the general principle of avoiding annexation if it could be avoided; Dalhousie acted on the general principle of annexing if he could do so legitimately.'[2] It was accidental, no doubt, that just at this time so many native rulers died

[1] *The Life of the Marquis of Dalhousie*, Sir W. Lee-Warner, vol. ii, p. 116.

[2] *A Short History of the British in India*, A. D. Innes, p. 279.

without heirs, but that being so, it would have been more expedient sometimes for the paramount power not to have exerted its full rights. It must be remembered also that 'lapse' was not the only means by which Dalhousie increased British dominion; opponents might say with some plausibility that, if the doctrine of lapse did not apply to all states, other principles, as in the case of Oudh, could readily be appealed to when Great Britain desired a pretext. An impartial critic, while fully recognizing the high and pure motives of the Governor-General, will not deny that there was abundant reason for uneasiness in the minds of native rulers, and there is much evidence to show that such uneasiness did, as a matter of fact, exist. Finally, as his latest biographer admits, Lord Dalhousie was sometimes rather unguarded and injudicious in the language he employed. The states that actually passed under British sway by lapse were Satara in 1848, Jaitpur and Sambalpur in 1849, Baghat in 1850, Udaipur in 1852, Jhansi in 1853, and Nagpur in 1854. In the case of three at least, and these the most important, no valid objection could be taken to Lord Dalhousie's policy either on the score of expediency or legal right. Satara was purely the creation of the British government. It had been bestowed as a principality on the representative of the house of Sivaji by Lord Hastings in 1819 after the overthrow of the Peshwa, and its existence had always been an embarrassment to the Presidency of Bombay, with which it was now incorporated. Jhansi was a tributary and dependent state in Bundelkhand which had also passed under British sway among Baji Rao's other dominions. It had been revived more than once, but on this occasion the belated adoption of the last Raja was set aside. The widowed Rani was pensioned, but in the Mutiny took a dreadful revenge for the loss of her throne by the massacre of every European who fell into her hands. Nagpur was by far the most important [illegible] ed states.

Conquered in 1818, Hastings had given back the forfeited kingdom to a prince of the royal house. The last Raja died in 1853, leaving neither collateral heirs nor adopted son. There was no need assuredly for the British government to grant away the sovereignty again. Of the political advantage to Great Britain of the annexation there could be no doubt. Nagpur comprised territory of 80,000 square miles with a population of 4,000,000; its possession gave us the finest cotton lands in India, and complete control of the land route from Calcutta to Bombay. On the other hand it might be pleaded that, as one of the great states of the Maratha confederacy, its annexation was bound to prompt misgivings in the hearts of other native rulers, who might not appreciate the subtle distinction—not always clear even to western minds—between 'dependent' states and 'protected allies'. Yet, on the whole, it may be concluded that the advantages of annexation in this case outweighed the disadvantages. The public auction of the jewels and furniture of the royal house, which made such an unfortunate impression, was a tactless blunder and one that might well have been avoided. In the other four cases mentioned there was some legitimate doubt as to whether they, properly speaking, fell under the definition of dependent states, and in regard to Udaipur in the Central Provinces it was fairly clear that, if heirs failed, the sovereignty lapsed to the Raja of Sarguja, not to the Company. In any event the states were small, and the gain of subjecting them to British rule hardly compensated for the uneasiness caused to surrounding chiefs. In the case of Baghat, a Cis-Sutlaj hill state, and Udaipur, Dalhousie's decision was afterwards reversed by Lord Canning. Finally the home government refused to approve of Dalhousie's tentative proposal to annex the little Rajput state of Karauli, on the ground that it was 'a protected ally' and not 'dependent'. They were undoubtedly right, and Dalhousie at once accepted their decision; on

higher political grounds it would have been extremely impolitic to annex these ancient Rajput states, and it is perhaps surprising that the Governor-General ever suggested it.

Besides these actual acquisitions of new territory, Lord Dalhousie swept away certain titular sovereignties which had long ceased to have any real meaning, on the ground that they might at any time become a nucleus and rallying-ground for seditious agitation. Since 1801 the Nawab of the Carnatic had been avowedly a *roi fainéant*; in 1853, on the death of a holder of the title, Dalhousie supported the contention of the Madras government, that no successor should be recognized. He maintained that the treaty of 1801 created merely a personal, and not a hereditary title, which had only been re-granted in 1819 and 1825 by the indulgence of the British government. This decision was partially reversed in 1867, when the claimant to the Nawabship was pensioned and allowed to adopt the semi-royal style of Prince of Arcot. The regal title was also abolished in the case of Tanjore, whose last Raja died in 1855 leaving only daughters. Dalhousie would gladly have arranged for the abolition of the Mughal's title at Delhi, but in this respect he was overruled by the Court. Finally, on the death of Baji Rao, the ex-Peshwa, in 1853, Dalhousie refused to continue to an adopted son, afterwards known as the notorious Nana Sahib, the huge pension of £80,000 which Sir John Malcolm had unwisely granted.

The annexation of Oudh falls under the head neither of conquest, lapse, nor abolition of purely titular sovereignties. Since Lord Wellesley's famous treaty of 1801, Oudh had been a protected feudatory state with full internal independence. Power without responsibility was thus given to the ruler of Oudh (on whom the title of King was conferred by Lord Hastings in 1819), and the degeneration of the native administration followed its dreary and normal course in such cases. The court was given up to vicious luxury and puerile

amusements. The people were oppressed; a special feature of misgovernment in Oudh was that many of the landowners, or 'talukdars', who were mainly Rajput in origin, resisted in their fortified strongholds the officers and disorderly armies of the King, and preyed on the hapless peasantry and weaker members of their own class. For many years the disorder had been going from bad to worse. Successive Governors-General had given solemn warning to the ruling house, especially Lord William Bentinck in 1831 and Lord Hardinge in 1847. But all without the least effect. Of the need of drastic intervention on behalf of a down-trodden people there can be no doubt. Colonel Sleeman in 1851 (though Dalhousie's critics declared he was sent forth as the 'missionary of a foregone conclusion') and Colonel Outram in 1854, both as a rule supporters of native dynasties and opposed to the policy of lapse, reported that the condition of Oudh was deplorable and could hardly be worse. Lord Dalhousie himself was in favour of taking over the administration and leaving to the King his nominal sovereignty with his palace, rank, and titles. But the home authorities overruled him and decided on annexation. In this particular case they were undoubtedly wrong and the Governor-General right. Lord Dalhousie would never have suggested the recognition of a titular sovereignty, to which as we have seen he was generally much opposed, had it not been for strong countervailing reasons. These were first, the unswerving loyalty of the Oudh dynasty to British rule ever since the treaty of 1801: secondly, the fact that the King of Oudh could with some reason maintain that annexation involved the repudiation of treaty obligations. The facts are involved and obscure, but may briefly be stated thus:— In 1837 Lord Auckland had concluded a treaty with the King of Oudh binding him *either* to introduce reforms *or* to hand over the administration to the British government while retaining the sovereignty. Now the Court of Directors

disallowed this treaty, but Lord Auckland only informed the King of the disallowance of one clause, and by an inexcusable piece of carelessness the treaty was actually included in a subsequent government publication and was referred to as still in force by succeeding Governors-General. Upon Lord Dalhousie was thrust the invidious task of explaining to the King that the treaty, which he and former Governors-General had believed to be in force since 1837, had really been abrogated two years after that date, and of expressing a tardy regret that the communication of this fact had been inadvertently neglected. Such miserable and unpardonable mismanagement obviously gave too much ground to those who held that the annexation of Oudh was 'a gross breach of national faith'. But for this the home authorities, and not Lord Dalhousie, were responsible. He would gladly have avoided the necessity of carrying out the annexation, but nobly volunteered to settle the question with all the weight his eight years' rule had given him rather than leave the task to a successor newly arrived in India. Outram in vain attempted to induce the King to abdicate; the annexation was proclaimed on February 13, 1856, and a generous pension was settled on the deposed monarch.

Only the briefest mention can be made of the great internal reforms initiated and developed by Lord Dalhousie. He opened the first Indian railway, planned under Lord Hardinge, and set up the first telegraph wire—'the accursed string that strangled us', as one of the mutineers called it. He set up the Public Works Department, and established a cheap and uniform postage service over the length and breadth of India; he was called upon to carry out the famous educational dispatch of July 1854, which 'sketched in outline a complete scheme of public education controlled and aided, and in part directly managed by the state'.

When Lord Dalhousie left India his health was obviously shattered by his unsparing labours, and he died in 1860 after

four years of physical pain and distress. These years were saddened by the apparent overthrow of his life work in the Mutiny. Naturally, though in great measure unjustly, his great annexations of territory, his innovations and reforms, were held to be the main cause of the revolt. He was accused of roughly overriding native feeling and native susceptibilities, of blindness to signs of unrest in the sepoy army, and of allowing the proportion of European to native troops to sink to too low a point. He refused to speak out in his own defence, partly because he proudly trusted to the verdict of posterity, partly from a noble resolve not to embarrass his successor or the home government by opening the floodgates of controversy. His private papers were left under seal for fifty years, and it is only within the last decade that they have been given to the world.[1] Their publication has cleared up many doubtful points, but his reputation had long been rehabilitated. Most of the charges against him were found to have been grossly exaggerated and some absolutely disproved: it was known, for instance, that he had urgently impressed upon the Cabinet that more European regiments should be sent to India, but his warnings had been disregarded. The great traits of his character are no longer in dispute. He was inspired with a noble and vivid ideal of duty, which drove him on to sacrifice his health and comfort recklessly. His powers of work were colossal, and, though he came to India with practically no previous experience of Indian problems, he mastered them in a remarkably short space of time. His minutes and dispatches are masterpieces of eloquent English, lucid statement, and merciless logic. He was a supremely able judge of character. 'As an imperial administrator', says Sir Richard Temple, one of his subordinates, 'he has never been surpassed and seldom equalled by any of the illustrious men whom England has sent forth to govern

[1] By Sir William Lee-Warner in his *Life of the Marquis of Dalhousie.*

India.' On the other hand, to use a hackneyed yet useful phrase, he had the defects of his qualities. He possibly attempted to do more than any one man, however able, could do. There was not much field left to his subordinates except to carry out his rather imperious will. Though he freely supported men with whom he was in complete agreement, he was somewhat intolerant of original ideas. It is only fair to remember that there was an opposition in India to many tendencies of his policy, and not a factious opposition only, but one based on reasoned principles. Men like Henry Lawrence, Low, Sleeman, and Outram, while freely admitting his splendid qualities, considered that he would have done better to pay more heed to native feelings and prejudices even at the cost of sacrificing some of his most valuable reforms. He had more downright opponents. The letters and diaries of Sir Charles Napier show to what a pitch enmity between able and high-minded men can be carried. In the controversy between them few doubt that on the whole Dalhousie was right, and Napier wrong. The latter, as we have seen in the case of Sind, had an almost limitless capacity for seeing only the right on his own side, and only the wrong on that of his opponents. But the collision between these two strong men, due to the fact that Napier altered the pay of the troops and disbanded regiments without consulting the Governor-General and Council, was doubly unfortunate. It seems undoubtedly true that Sir Charles Napier had some premonitory warnings of mutinous discontent in the sepoy armies. He was not consistent in his statements on the point, and greatly exaggerated them for controversial reasons. For the same reasons Dalhousie refused even to consider them. Had Napier been more temperate in his warnings and Dalhousie more ready to listen to advice, the whole question might have been opened and settled instead of being obscured by heated manifestoes, slashing minutes, and bitter enmities.

CHAPTER XXIX

THE CAUSES OF THE MUTINY. LORD CANNING

LORD CANNING, who succeeded the Marquis of Dalhousie in February 1856, had won a reputation for scholarship at Oxford and for statesmanlike ability as Postmaster-General. He was capable and industrious but somewhat diffident of his own powers, and not personally ambitious. Slow in making up his mind to any particular course of action, and conscientious almost to a fault, when he had once chosen his ground he defended it skilfully and held it with tenacity. Seeing many sides to every question and an adept at weighing evidence, he possessed the judicial rather than the administrative temperament. He hid a warm heart under a reserved and cold manner. Had his lot been cast in peaceful times he would have been an ideal head for the Indian government, but he was called upon to deal with one of the most terrible crises that ever confronted a statesman. Some of his actions were open to criticism, and have been freely criticized: but on the whole he emerged nobly from the appalling ordeal to which he was subjected. If he lacked the daring resolution, imperious will, and personal force of Dalhousie, he displayed a splendid constancy under taunts and misrepresentation, and he possessed a curious power of detaching himself from the influences and passions of the moment in solving intricate problems.

It appeared at first as though a central Asian question might chiefly engage the new Governor-General's attention. In 1855 the British minister at Teheran had been driven

away by insulting treatment. In the following year Persian forces occupied Herat—a breach of the treaty of 1814. Canning was ordered by the home government to declare war in the name of the Company. A British expedition was sent to the Persian Gulf, captured Bushire and inflicted several defeats on the enemy. Finally a peace was made in May by which Persia agreed to evacuate Herat and interfere no more in Afghan affairs. This short war, and two treaties made in 1855 and 1857 with Dost Muhammad (signed by Sir John Lawrence but really due to Herbert Edwardes), were of importance as winning the favour of the Afghan chief and preventing him from embarrassing us during the Mutiny. The victorious troops on their return found work to do on a grimmer field, for the sepoys had broken out in the meantime.

There are two main views of the origin and meaning of the Indian Mutiny: one, that it was a mere military rising: the other, that it was a widespread conspiracy carefully organized for the overthrow of British power. The men with the best opportunity of judging came to diametrically opposite views on this point. Sir John Lawrence held that the Mutiny had its origin in the army and that its proximate cause was the cartridge affair and nothing else. It was not attributable to any antecedent conspiracy whatever, although it was afterwards taken advantage of by disaffected persons to compass their own ends. The view of Sir James Outram is almost the exact antithesis of this: he believed that it was the result of a Muhammadan conspiracy making capital of Hindu grievances. The cartridge incident merely 'precipitated the Mutiny before it had been thoroughly organized and before adequate arrangements had been made for making the Mutiny a first step to a popular insurrection'.

On the whole, in spite of the fact that in some districts the people seem to have risen before the sepoys, Lawrence's

view seems most nearly to approximate to the truth. We may assume, therefore, that the rising was mainly military in origin, but that it occurred at a time when, for various reasons, there was much social and political discontent, and that the mutineers were promptly joined by interested adventurers, who tried to give it a particular direction to suit their own schemes. Fortunately for British dominion in India there was no single national cause to which the agitators could appeal. The fabric of British power was built over the ashes of warring factions and race enmities. The Mutiny was exploited alike to revive the vanished glories of the Mughal Empire—the foe of all Hindu principalities—and to re-establish the power of the Maratha Peshwa—the hereditary rebel against Mughal authority. The fact that the political direction of the Mutiny first fell into the hands of men who replaced Bahadur Shah upon his imperial throne, was enough in itself to alienate the sympathies of all Hindu states. The attempt to summon back the ghost of Maratha supremacy was, as it were, only the political second thought of the Mutiny, and came too late for success, when the back of the rebellion was broken and the cause of the insurgents was obviously waning.

The causes of the Mutiny may be summed up under the headings, political, social, religious, and military, but if the view adopted above is the right one, it is obvious that the latter alone can properly be considered to have brought about the actual outbreak; the other headings apply rather to the general unrest of the time which afforded so favourable a field for that movement to develop and spread.

To deal with the political causes first. There can be no doubt that Dalhousie's annexations and the doctrine of lapse had caused a thrill of uneasiness and suspicion throughout India. This fact does not necessarily involve any condemnation of the late Governor-General's policy. In all great reforms some vested interests must be alienated,

and it is arguable that, but for the blunder of the greased cartridges, the political discontent would have been allayed by time and never have passed beyond the stage of a vague unrest. But some Englishmen in India had uttered warnings of the dangers ahead. Colonel Sleeman in 1853 had written words that future events made prophetic: 'The native states I consider to be breakwaters, and when they are all swept away we shall be left to the mercy of our native army, which may not always be sufficiently under our control.' Since Lord Dalhousie entered upon office, the great Sikh power had finally fallen; Oudh, the premier Muhammadan state, had been annexed; Satara, the original seat of the Sivaji, and Nagpur, one of the greatest states of the Maratha 'pentarchy', had been absorbed. Little indeed was left of the majesty of the Mughal Empire, but even that was diminished, for it had been ordained that on the death of the titular King of Delhi his successor was to leave his ancestral palace and eschew something of his royal splendour. In private unguarded words were often used which might well lead to the conviction that British policy had embarked on an unscrupulous course of aggrandizement. This, as we have seen, was far from the truth, but native hearers could hardly be expected to discriminate between authoritative statements and such language, half jest half earnest, as that used for instance by Sir Charles Napier in his private correspondence: 'Were I Emperor of India for twelve years, she should be traversed by railways and have her rivers bridged. . . . No Indian Prince should exist. The Nizam should be no more heard of. . . . Nepal would be ours. . . .'[1] We have seen that Dalhousie had refused to continue to Nana Sahib, the adopted son of the ex-Peshwa, the huge pension that had been granted to the latter by Sir John Malcolm. In this he was perfectly justified, for the

[1] *The Life and Opinions of General Sir C. J. Napier.* Ed. by Sir W. Napier, vol. iv, p. 188.

grant was only made to Baji Rao for life, and in the course of the thirty-five years during which he enjoyed the pension, he had accumulated a large fortune which Nana Sahib inherited. But, in the eyes of Hindus, Nana Sahib had succeeded to the office and privileges of the Peshwaship; the withdrawal of the pension made him the bitter and relentless foe of British rule, and was widely resented by his countrymen as an act of injustice. During the early months of 1857 Nana Sahib was moving to and fro from Delhi to Lucknow, a sinister figure, weaving a web of intrigue and sending his emissaries far and wide to enlist support and foster every movement of revolt.

Secondly, from the social aspect, every annexation of a native state not only deposed a reigning house but still further limited the rapidly narrowing field in which men of Indian race could display their political and administrative talents. In the pacification of conquered territories, and in the land settlements carried out in recent years, the claims of native aristocracies had been severely scrutinized by zealous officials, whose aim, in many ways laudable, was to protect the ryot, or peasant, from exaction and deal with him directly instead of through hereditary revenue collectors and middlemen. Bentinck's resumption of rent-free tenures had regained for the state much revenue that had been fraudulently withheld, but it had also reduced to poverty many landowners whose title-deeds had been lost or who had held their estates by long prescriptive right. In the five years preceding the Mutiny the famous *Inam* commission at Bombay (i. e. a commission to inquire into rent-free tenures) had confiscated 20,000 estates. In Oudh, above all, serious social unrest had been caused by the changes, many of them inevitable, that followed on annexation. Unfortunately, Sir James Outram, under whom the transformation was being smoothly worked, left Oudh in April 1856, and was succeeded by an energetic, just, but unsympathetic

officer, Coverly Jackson, as Chief Commissioner. The native royal army was disbanded and the soldiers lost their livelihood. A too strict inquiry was made into the titles of the 'Talukdars' of Oudh, the hereditary revenue collectors, whose office had given them almost feudal rights over the soil and its cultivators. The recall of Jackson and the appointment of Sir Henry Lawrence did much to mend matters, and, in spite of the fact that Oudh became the chief theatre of the war, the 'Talukdars' did not as a body support the rebels till Havelock in his first advance was forced to turn back from Lucknow, nor did they themselves rise till Lord Canning's injudicious proclamation, which will be mentioned later, drove them to desperation.

Thirdly, to the devout Hindu, and especially to the priesthood, the hated and iconoclastic power of the British seemed to have invaded even the immaterial realms of faith and caste. There was a widespread belief that Lord Canning had been commissioned to convert India to Christianity. Hindu mythology had been disparaged in a brilliant essay by Macaulay, at one time member of the Governor-General's Council. *Satī* and infanticide had been prohibited. European science, astronomy, and surgery were all opposed to the teaching of the Brahmans. The mysticism and symbolism of the East were fading before the cold light of western materialism. The telegraph and railway were looked upon askance as magical and diabolical agencies. Recent laws had been passed that Hindu widows were free to marry a second time, and that a change of religion should not debar the convert from inheriting property. 'It must be admitted', says Sir William Lee-Warner, 'that even the most ignorant and apathetic Hindu was brought into more conscious touch with the spirit of the West during the eight years preceding 1857 than at any other period in the history of India.'[1]

[1] *The Life of the Marquis of Dalhousie.* By Sir William Lee-Warner, vol. ii, p. 379.

Lastly, we must take into account the condition of the sepoy army. The disparity in numbers between European and Indian troops had lately been growing greater; when Lord Dalhousie left India the army consisted of 233,000 natives and 45,322 British soldiers. For this, as we have seen, Dalhousie was not to blame: he had in vain endeavoured to get drafts from home to replace the regiments taken away from India for service in the Crimea. The disproportion was rendered more serious by the growing deficiency of officers, and of officers of the best type, who had been employed by Dalhousie in increasing numbers for administrative posts upon the frontier. The distribution of the troops was also very faulty. Delhi and Allahabad were wholly held by native levies and, except for one regiment at Dinapore, there were no British soldiers between Allahabad and Calcutta.

The Bengal army, as distinct from those of Madras and Bombay, had always been more difficult to handle from the great number of high caste men, Brahmans and Rajputs, in its ranks. Their discipline had been lately impaired. They had intensely disliked service in Afghanistan, and the men who returned were taunted by their fellows with having forfeited their caste. There had been some sinister outbreaks of insubordination in recent years. In 1824, as already mentioned, the 47th regiment was disbanded for refusing to serve in Burma. In 1844 four Bengal regiments declined to serve in Sind till extra allowances were made to them. The 66th native infantry mutinied at Govindgarh in 1849, and the 38th Bengal native infantry, who were acting within their rights, refused to serve in Burma in 1852. Great uneasiness was caused to the Bengal army in July 1856 by the passing of the General Service Enlistment Act, which forbade henceforward the enlisting of any recruit, who would not march whithersoever his services should be required. Hitherto, the scruples of the high caste sepoy as

to crossing the sea, or serving out of India, had been respected; but with the rapid growth of the empire this limitation had been found irksome. The Act only applied of course to the future, but the sepoy was now practically the member of an hereditary military caste, and it meant to him either that his sons must be debarred from following his own profession or that they must run the risk of being outcasted.

The terrible blunder of the 'greased cartridges' fanned into a fierce and devouring flame all this smouldering discontent. The facts are well known. A rumour pervaded the sepoy army that the cartridges to be used with the new Enfield rifle had been greased with the fat of cows and pigs with the deliberate intention to outcast and defile both the Hindu, to whom the cow was sacred, and the Muhammadan, to whom swine were unclean. The story was everywhere received with an eager credulity which defied explanation, argument, remonstrance, and denial. Most unfortunately there was a certain amount of truth in the charge. Through carelessness or ignorance animal fat had actually been used in the ammunition factories at Woolwich. This was not discovered at once and was denied by the officers in good faith. The sepoys knowing the fact to be true, when they heard the denial, naturally imagined that they were being wilfully misled, and their worst suspicions were confirmed. Even when the mistake was rectified, no protestations of their officers, no proclamations or orders had any effect in restoring confidence.

Through the first four months of 1857 the whole native army of Bengal was in a state of sullen, brooding unrest. Outbreaks of incendiarism—a sure sign of sepoy discontent—occurred at Barrackpore in March, and a native regiment was disbanded. In April at the great military station of Meerut in the North-West Provinces some troopers of a native cavalry regiment, in spite of the explanations and

appeals of their Colonel, refused on parade to use the cartridges supplied to them. After trial by court martial they were sentenced to ten years' imprisonment. On May 9 they were publicly degraded, stripped of their uniforms, and manacled. The assembled troops, overawed by loaded field guns and the drawn swords of an English dragoon regiment, made no sign, but the mutineers, as they were marched off to jail, shouted back reproaches on their comrades and curses on their commanding officer.

CHAPTER XXX

THE MUTINY

AT Meerut on May 10, 1857, when the station was plunged in the calm of a Sunday evening, three native regiments rose, shot down their officers, broke open the prisons, released their comrades, and marched off to Delhi. Had they been vigorously pursued and cut down, it is more than likely that the Mutiny would have spread no further; but through the fatal inaction of the commanding officer of the station they were allowed to escape undisturbed. On the morning of the next day the outposts of the mutineers galloped into Delhi and called upon the troops there to revolt. Not a single British regiment was quartered at that time in Delhi, and in a few hours the city was in the hands of the rebels. The British officers of the sepoy battalions were murdered, every European found met the same fate, and the telegraph operator had only time to flash his alarming messages to the chief stations in the Punjab when he was cut down at his post. Finding resistance hopeless, the British defenders of the great magazine with splendid gallantry blew it and a thousand mutineers into the air. The rebels bursting into the Palace proclaimed Bahadur Shah, the old King of Delhi, once more Mughal Emperor of India.

Fortunately a short respite was given to the British authorities reeling under this shattering blow. No further mutinies, except in small and isolated stations, occurred for about three weeks, and though the space of time was all too short for what had to be done, it was something gained.

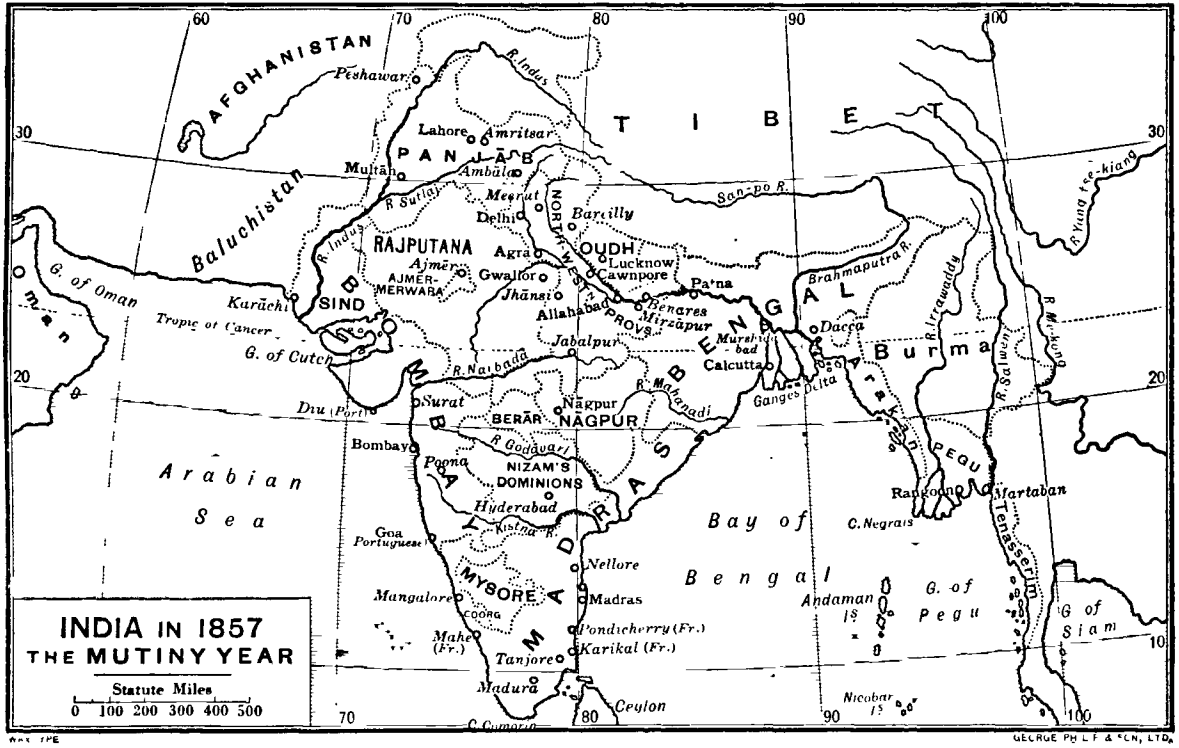
The most vigorous action came from the Punjab, in spite of the fact that a threefold peril had to be faced in that province—disaffection in the sepoy regiments, the risk of an Afghan invasion, and that of a rising of the Sikhs. Happily Dost Muhammad remained splendidly loyal to the treaties of 1855 and 1857, and the army of the Khalsa made no attempt to profit by the disasters of their recent conquerors. The sepoy regiments at Lahore were promptly disbanded, and a movable column was formed under John Nicholson to attack and destroy any mutinous bodies.

The most pressing need for the restoration of British prestige was the recapture of Delhi. Both Canning and Sir John Lawrence vehemently urged this upon Anson, the Commander-in-Chief, who, for the moment however, found it impossible to advance for lack of transport and supplies. Before the expedition could start, mutiny became general over Oudh, Rohilkhand, and many parts of central India. Between May 29 and June 5 the sepoys rose at Nasirabad in Rajputana, at Nimach in the Gwalior state, at Bareilly in Rohilkhand, and at Lucknow, Benares, and Cawnpore in Oudh, while the Rani of Jhansi headed the revolt in Bundelkhand and massacred every European that fell into her hands. In almost every case the mutineers after the outbreak set their faces towards Delhi; many murdered their officers before doing so; some, with a curious remnant of fidelity, escorted them first to positions of safety and then after saluting them marched off to join their comrades. In Oudh alone was this movement checked. The mutineers at Cawnpore had actually started along the Delhi road on June 5 when they were headed off by Nana Sahib the next day and brought back to besiege the British garrison weakly entrenched there. The rebels of Lucknow also remained to besiege the Residency, well provisioned and fortified by Sir Henry Lawrence, who alone of men in high positions seems to have realized from the beginning of the year the

true nature of the peril that was approaching. For the moment, however, we must disregard the course of events in Oudh and return to the movements converging on Delhi.

Anson, marching from Ambala, died of cholera on May 27 at Karnal, less than half-way on the road to Delhi. He was succeeded by Sir Henry Barnard, who on June 4 was joined by Archdale Wilson from Meerut. Their combined forces defeated a rebel army at Badli Sarai on June 8, dislodged the enemy from the famous Ridge overlooking the city of Delhi, and made their camp there. Nominally the besieging force, they were themselves in reality besieged. Their number at first was under 5,000. That of the enemy was about 30,000, and reinforcements were constantly thronging into Delhi by the southern and eastern roads, which were completely open. All through June and July the English force maintained its position on the Ridge with difficulty, having constantly to beat back fierce attacks from the mutineers in the city.

Meanwhile Sir John Lawrence and his able coadjutors, Herbert Edwardes, John Nicholson, and Sydney Cotton, having crushed down mutiny in their own province, were straining every nerve to reinforce the army before Delhi and taking a splendid risk in denuding the Punjab of troops. To many the policy must have seemed hazardous in the extreme. There could be no certainty then that Dost Muhammad would remain faithful to his treaties, or, even if he did, that he could restrain his turbulent countrymen from raids upon our frontier. It must have appeared very doubtful whether the Sikhs could permanently resist the temptation to recover their independence. Little wonder that Lawrence, upon whom responsibility for failure would have fallen, often lagged behind the eager promptings of Edwardes or Nicholson. In his proposal, however, to surrender Peshawar to the Afghans and withdraw to the



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line of the Indus, he seems in the face of Edwardes's fervent entreaties to have contemplated a calamitous blunder from which he was only saved by the order of the Governor-General, to whom he appealed, to 'hold on to Peshawar to the last'. At the end of July Lawrence at last considered it safe to send Nicholson with his splendid column to join the British forces before Delhi, and the latter's wonderful vigour inspired a new spirit into the besiegers. Barnard, like Anson, had been smitten down by death (July 5), and his successor, General Reed, having soon resigned from ill-health, the nominal commander was Sir Archdale Wilson, though the real leader was Nicholson himself. On September 6 the heavy siege train arrived, after a daring attempt of the enemy to intercept it had been brilliantly defeated by Nicholson. On September 14 the Kashmir Gate was blown in and four columns advanced for the storm of Delhi. After six days' desperate fighting the city fell and the palace was taken. The English had 1,450 men put out of action, including Nicholson, who was mortally wounded as he stepped forward in a narrow lane swept by a withering fire to encourage a division that had momentarily wavered. The King was taken prisoner with his two sons, and the Princes were pistolled by Hodson, a brilliant cavalry leader, who had persuaded himself that they were guilty of the murder of English men and women, and that an attempt to rescue them would be made by the mob before he could take them to a place of safe custody.

To complete the narrative of the taking of Delhi the chronological order of events has been disregarded, and we must now retrace our footsteps. We have seen that by the first week in June Oudh was seething with rebellion and the mutineers were converging round two centres, Lucknow and Cawnpore. While the rising in that province threatened to cut all communications between Calcutta and the Punjab,

it, at any rate, kept large bodies of rebels occupied who would otherwise have flocked to Delhi. The siege of the entrenchments at Cawnpore began on June 6 and lasted till the 26th; that of the Residency at Lucknow began on July 1 and continued till its final relief on November 16. The most strenuous efforts were made to relieve these two towns, and it was round them that the fiercest fighting of the whole war took place. On June 11 Neill by a bold and fortunate stroke secured the great fortress of Allahabad, valiantly held by an English officer with a small Sikh force but in imminent danger of falling into the hands of the enemy. This town was destined henceforward to be the base of operations for the relief of the beleaguered garrisons in Oudh and the ultimate reconquest of the province. Twelve days later Neill was joined by General Havelock just returned from the Persian expedition, an officer grown grey in the service in subordinate positions, to whom the task of relieving Lucknow and Cawnpore had been committed. On July 7 Havelock marched out of Allahabad with a little army of 2,000 men for what was to prove, considering the appalling difficulties that faced him, perhaps the most glorious campaign of the Mutiny. His meagre force was decimated by cholera and dysentery. The fierce rays of the Indian sun beat unmercifully on the exhausted ranks; and the enemy fought desperately and determinedly. Havelock was outnumbered ten to one. Yet between July 12 and September 25 he fought twelve pitched battles and accomplished his task. He knew even before he left Allahabad that, though the garrison at Lucknow was holding out, the end had come to the heroic defence at Cawnpore, and all he could hope to do there was to save, if possible, the lives of the women and children who were in the hands of Nana Sahib. The facts of the surrender are well known and can be only briefly summarized here. The garrison, through terrible misery and suffering, held out till June 26, and then,

as the only hope of saving the non-combatants, surrendered on promise of honourable treatment to Nana Sahib, who from his estate at Bithur, granted him by the Company, was directing the operations of the mutineers. The British left their entrenchments and were conducted to boats on the river, but even before they had pushed off from the bank a hail of bullets and grape-shot from the banks overwhelmed them and a hideous carnage began. Four men only made their escape, the rest were massacred, and about 125 women and children were dragged ashore and reserved for a yet more dreadful fate.

After four fierce conflicts Havelock entered Cawnpore only to find that the day before his entry the captives, with some others brought in from other stations to the number of two hundred and eleven, had been foully murdered and their bodies flung into the famous well of Cawnpore. Leaving Neill, who had followed him from Allahabad, to take a grim vengeance for this ghasty deed, Havelock marched out on July 25 to cover the forty-two miles that separated him from Lucknow. There Sir Henry Lawrence had died on July 4 from a shell wound, but his work and influence lived on after him and inspired the defence which was splendidly maintained by Inglis. After winning two victories Havelock's little army was so shattered by cholera, sunstroke, and losses in action that he was forced for the moment to fall back on Cawnpore. There he defeated a large force of the enemy who were pressing Neill hard, and recruited his strength. He crossed the Ganges once more on September 19 with Outram, who had come out to supersede him, but who nobly volunteered to serve under his leadership till Lucknow was relieved. He routed the enemy in three more battles and fought his way at the point of the bayonet into Lucknow on September 25, just five days after Delhi had been finally occupied. As John Nicholson was mortally wounded in the storm of Delhi, so Neill, who so much

resembled him in impetuous valour and force of character, met his death in the narrow streets of Lucknow.

These two events, the fall of Delhi and the relief of Lucknow, mark the end of the first stage of the Mutiny—the first desperate fight for very existence that had to be waged by men standing despairingly at bay without help from England. The back of the Mutiny was broken. From henceforward begins the second stage of reconquest. There was indeed yet much to be done; Lucknow itself had to be relieved a second time, for Havelock and Outram were not strong enough to remove the garrison and were themselves besieged; but the tension of the situation was lessened; there was time to draw breath; reinforcements were steadily pouring in from England, and two Generals of great experience, Sir Colin Campbell, Commander-in-Chief (afterwards Lord Clyde), and Sir Hugh Rose (afterwards Lord Strathnairn), were, the one on his way, and the other already landed in India. The operations that remained were briefly the reconquest of Oudh and Rohilkhand by Sir Colin Campbell, the brilliant campaign of Sir Hugh Rose in central India, starting from Bombay through districts where the rebels had hitherto been left almost undisturbed, and the final breaking up and pursuit of fugitive bands.

On November 9 Sir Colin Campbell advanced with 5,000 men for the second relief of Lucknow, and entered the city after a desperate conflict on the 16th. The non-combatants were removed, and Campbell began his return march to Cawnpore on the 27th, leaving Outram strongly posted with 4,000 men at the Alam Bagh, a large walled garden about four miles from the city. There the brave old hero Havelock, who died on November 24, worn out by his exertions and privations, was fittingly buried near the city he had saved. Sir Colin Campbell on his return was only just in time to avert a serious disaster, for the mutinous Gwalior

contingent, 20,000 strong, under Tantia Topi, a Maratha Brahman, had suddenly advanced from Kalpi and repulsed General Windham, left in charge at Cawnpore. These troops had mutinied in June, but this was the first effective move they had made. Campbell severely defeated them on December 6, and proceeded to a regular campaign in Oudh and Rohilkhand. He was joined before Lucknow by a force of Gurkhas under Jang Bahadur, the able minister of the Raja of Nepal, who never lost faith in the British cause. Lucknow was finally captured and cleared of rebels by March 1, though Campbell's dread of losing men enabled large bodies of the enemy to make their escape. The resistance in Oudh was unfortunately prolonged by Canning's injudicious proclamation at the end of March, which declared the lands of all Talukdars forfeit to Government except those of six specifically mentioned and of others who could prove their loyalty. Canning's intention undoubtedly was to restore most of these estates after careful inquiry, but this was naturally not understood by the Talukdars, who in large numbers abandoned the attitude they had hitherto adopted of neutrality or mere passive support of the rebels for one of active participation, maintaining a harassing guerilla warfare till the end of the year. In May Campbell captured Bareilly in Rohilkhand, and this practically concluded operations on a large scale in the north.

Meanwhile Sir Hugh Rose had conducted a brilliant and decisive campaign in Bundelkhand, the southernmost theatre of the Mutiny. Advancing from Mhow, his base of operations, on January 8, 1858, he captured Ratgarh, and relieved Saugor in February. In March he invested Jhansi, and, after utterly defeating a great relieving army under Tantia Topi at the battle of the Betwa, he carried the fortress by storm. In May he routed a large army at Kunch. The campaign seemed over and he had just laid aside his command when he was startled by news of the deepest import.

The Rani of Jhansi and Tantia Topi, round whom the pursuers were closing, had conceived the brilliant design of marching to Gwalior on the desperate chance that Sindhia's army would come over to them. The Gwalior contingent or subsidiary force, as we have seen, had long joined the rebels, but Sindhia had hitherto kept his own army loyal. The daring scheme succeeded. When Sindhia marched forth to encounter the enemy his whole army deserted him; he himself barely escaped with his personal bodyguard to Agra. The rebels occupied Gwalior, seized the arsenal and the treasury, and proclaimed Nana Sahib as Peshwa. Rose recognized at once the terrible danger that Tantia Topi might now strike southwards into the Deccan and, with all the prestige that the possession of Sindhia's capital gave him, blow into flame the disaffection which, though as yet kept under, was known to exist south of the Narbada. With a supreme effort he flung his wearied troops on Gwalior and defeated the rebels in two battles, in one of which the Rani of Jhansi, clad in male attire, met a soldier's death. He recaptured the city on June 20.

Though it still smouldered in outlying districts, the great conflagration of the Mutiny had now been stamped out, and Canning felt himself justified in proclaiming peace on July 8. Some of the leaders still eluded their pursuers. But Nana Sahib was eventually driven into the pestilential jungles of the Tarai on the borders of Nepal and probably perished there miserably, for he was never seen again. Tantia Topi escaped southwards and was hunted up and down Bundelkhand and Malwa till he was betrayed into the hands of the British in April 1859 and hanged for complicity in the massacre of Cawnpore.

CHAPTER XXXI

THE END OF THE EAST INDIA COMPANY

THE Mutiny was over. Some reasons for the final English victory may here be considered. First, widespread and formidable though the revolt was, it was yet to some extent localized. The area affected was the Punjab, the United Provinces, Rohilkhand, Oudh, the territory between the Narbada and the Chambal, and the western part of Bihar and Bengal. On the north-west Afghanistan remained friendly under Dost Muhammad, Sind was quiet, Rajputana was loyal under the tactful guidance of George Lawrence, a third member of that family the value of whose services to England in the Mutiny was incalculable. India south of the Narbada made no movement of importance, though a native regiment mutinied at Kolhapur in the southern Maratha country, and there were very dangerous ebullitions of feeling at Hyderabad, the Nizam's capital. Central and eastern Bengal were undisturbed, and Nepal rendered the British valuable assistance in putting down the revolt.

Secondly, with the exception of the Rani of Jhansi, the Begam of Oudh, and some minor chiefs, none of the feudatory princes threw in their lot with the rebels. Sindhia and Holkar remained loyal, though their armies rose. The chieftains of Sirhind, prominent among whom were the Rajas of Patiala and Jind, repaid with a splendid devotion the protection granted to their ancestors against the aggression of Ranjit Singh. It would not be easy to estimate how much Great Britain owes to two great Indian statesmen, Sir Dinkar Rao of Gwalior and Sir Salar Jang of Hyderabad,

for the retention of her Indian Empire. Sir Dinkar Rao, the minister of the young Sindhia, did much to keep his master loyal, and the importance of this can hardly be overstated. Had Sindhia raised the standard of revolt, every Maratha state would have joined him. 'His loyalty', says General Innes, 'saved India for the British.'[1] Again, the peril of an outbreak at Hyderabad, with its large and turbulent Muhammadan population, was at one time very great, and it was only warded off by the extraordinarily prompt and energetic conduct of Sir Salar Jang, 'a man', says Mr. Rice Holmes, 'whose name deserves to be ever mentioned by Englishmen with gratitude and admiration'.[2] Thirdly, it may be said that the mutiny which called forth so much ability on the British side produced no leader amongst the rebels; perhaps the most capable was a woman, the Rani of Jhansi. Sir John Lawrence used to dwell on the many errors of judgement committed by the mutineers and to declare that after they had revolted they seemed to become demented in their manner of conducting the rebellion, and often took the one course that was foredoomed to failure.

Fourthly, there were the exceptional characters of the men who were called upon to grapple with the Mutiny at the outset—the Lawrences, Outram, Havelock, Nicholson, Neill, and Edwardes. Had they proved weak, or even men of ordinary ability, none could have foretold the issue. The hardest fighting fell to their share. It is noticeable that the mutineers were far more formidable as a fighting force in the earlier months. The battles were more stubbornly contested, and the losses inflicted on the British far greater in the fighting round Delhi and in Havelock's and Outram's campaigns than they were in the operations of Sir Colin Campbell and Sir Hugh Rose. After the fall of Delhi and

[1] *The Sepoy Revolt.* By Lieut.-General M'Leod Innes, p. 301.
[2] *History of the Indian Mutiny.* By T. R. E. Holmes, 1898, p. 499.

the first relief of Lucknow the resistance of the mutineers sensibly weakened. Sir Hugh Rose conducted a brilliant campaign, but he had the advantage of leisurely preparation and a good and efficient cavalry force, while the armies he met were dispirited and badly led.

Fifthly, there were the noble efforts of Lord Canning and Sir John Lawrence at an early stage to check the outcry both in England and India for a ruthless and indiscriminate policy of vengeance. That outcry was natural enough, for the provocation had been terrible. Many excesses could be forgiven to the men who had gazed with starting eyes and quivering lips on the horrors of the shambles of Cawnpore. Even Nicholson clamoured that 'the flaying alive, impalement, or burning of the murderers of the women and children at Delhi'[1] should be legalized. But Canning, though ready to exact the sternest penalties from the guilty, insisted that no mistake should be made as to their guilt. He passed regulations to check the excesses of self-appointed tribunals and to ensure proper trial and inquiry in all cases. He was loudly and bitterly assailed at the time, but maintained his view with a noble disdain of popular clamour. He was nicknamed 'Clemency Canning' in derision, but it was afterwards recognized that his clemency was not only morally splendid but politically expedient, for nothing could have been more dangerous than to embitter irretrievably our relations with the subject peoples.

The suppression of the Mutiny was deemed a fitting time for the Crown finally to take over the control of the Indian government. Against this decision the Company protested in a dignified and weighty petition drawn up by John Stuart Mill. They proudly claimed that the foundations of the Indian Empire had been laid by themselves 'at the same period at which a succession of administrations under the

[1] *History of the Indian Mutiny*, Kaye and Malleson, vol. ii, p. 301.

control of Parliament were losing to the Crown of Great Britain another great empire on the opposite side of the Atlantic'. They challenged the most searching investigation into the causes of the Mutiny, and pointed out with much force that in Indian affairs the government of the Crown had long possessed the deciding voice, and was thus 'in the fullest sense accountable for all that has been done, and for all that has been forborne or omitted to be done'. It was unreasonable to seek a remedy by 'annihilating the branch of the ruling authority which could not be the one principally in fault, and might be altogether blameless, in order to concentrate all powers in the branch which had necessarily the decisive share in every error, real or supposed'. But the Company did not seek to vindicate themselves at the expense of any other authority: 'They claim their full share of the responsibility of the manner in which India has practically been governed. That responsibility is to them not a subject of humiliation, but of pride. They are conscious that their advice and initiative have been, and have deserved to be, a great and potent element in the conduct of affairs in India, and they feel complete assurance that the more attention is bestowed and the more light thrown upon India and its administration, the more evident it will become that the government in which they have borne a part has been not only one of the purest in intention, but one of the most beneficent in act, ever known among mankind . . . and they are satisfied that whatever further improvements may be hereafter effected in India can only consist in the development of germs already planted, and in building on foundations already laid, under their authority, and in great measure by their express instructions.' In a further paper the Company pointed out the essential difference between the government of India and that of other colonies of the empire, 'the government of dependencies by a Minister and his subordinates, under the

sole control of Parliament, is not a new experiment in England. That form of colonial government lost the United States, and had nearly lost all the colonies of any considerable population and importance. The colonial administration of this country has only ceased to be a subject of general condemnation since the principle has been adopted of leaving all the important colonies to manage their own affairs, a course which cannot be followed with the people of India.' All governments require constitutional checks, and in the case of India, since representative institutions were, at the time at any rate, impracticable, the constitutional security must lie in the construction of the administrative system itself; 'the forms of business are the real constitution of India'.

These dignified protests did not avail to avert the change, though, as the Court of Directors acknowledged, the 'clamour which represented the government of India by the Company as characterized by nearly every fault of which a civilized government can be accused' was succeeded by 'an almost universal acknowledgement that the rule of the Company has been honourable to themselves and beneficial to India'.[1] The assumption of the government of India by the Crown was indeed, as Sir H. S. Cunningham wrote, 'rather a formal than a substantial change'.[2] All real power had long passed to the President of the Board of Control, and the Directors had been for some time in the position of an advisory council, though with considerable powers of initiative. The last Charter Act of 1853, by throwing open the civil service to competition, had deprived the Directors of their most valued privilege, the patronage of India: it had also reduced their numbers from twenty-four to eighteen, and made six of them nominees of the Crown. This enabled the Government to appoint to the Court retired servants of the Company,

[1] *Report to the General Court of Proprietors*, 1858, p. 2.
[2] *Earl Canning*. By Sir H. S. Cunningham [Rulers of India Series], p. 170.

men who had little chance of being elected under the old system, and thus to leaven the directorate with first-hand Indian experience. The Act was obviously preparing the way for the assumption by the Crown of the government of India in name as well as in fact, for it gave no definite renewal of the charter for a term of years, as former measures had done, but merely provided that the Indian territories should remain under the administration of the Company in trust for the Crown until Parliament should determine otherwise. The Act of 1858 completed the process thus begun. A Secretary of State for India was to take the place of the President of the Board of Control. He was to be advised by a Council of fifteen appointed in the first instance for life, afterwards for ten to fifteen years; eight members were selected by the Crown, seven by the Court of Directors, subsequent vacancies in these seven places being filled by the Council itself. Though some of the old powers of the Court of Directors passed to the Secretary of State, its influence mainly lingered on in the Council. One of the chief advantages of the transfer of government from the Company to the Crown, though it caused at the time serious disaffection among the white troops, and especially among the officers, lay in the end of the awkward dualism of the Company's and the Queen's army, the Indian and the Royal navy.

On November 1, 1858, the new government was proclaimed by Lord Canning at Allahabad as first Viceroy and Governor-General for the Crown. The Queen, who had rejected the first proclamation submitted to her and requested that the revised draft 'should breathe feelings of generosity, benevolence, and religious toleration', disclaimed, as the Company had so often done, all desire for an extension of territory, promised to respect 'the rights, dignity, and honour' of native Princes and to uphold religious toleration, and declared it to be her will 'that so far as may be,

our subjects, of whatever race or creed, be freely and impartially admitted to offices in our service, the duties of which they may be qualified by their education, ability, and integrity, duly to discharge'. Pardon and amnesty were offered to all those still in arms against the British government who had not been guilty of the murder of British subjects. The proclamation ended with a promise of measures for the material and moral improvement of the Indian peoples in whose 'prosperity will be our strength, in their contentment our security, and in their gratitude our best reward'.

The government now deliberately and openly renounced the policy of lapse, and the feudatory chiefs were granted *sunnads* or charters empowering them to adopt heirs. Henceforward the continual existence of native states was guaranteed, but their rights were limited and defined. They could have no relations with foreign powers, nor with each other, except through British mediation. Their military forces were to be strictly limited. Over internal affairs they had full control, except that in his minute of April 30, 1860, Lord Canning affirmed the principle that the government of India is not precluded 'from stepping in to set right such serious abuses in a native government as may threaten any part of the country with anarchy or disturbance, nor from assuming temporary charge of a native state when there shall be sufficient reason to do so'.

The change from Company to Crown government made few changes in the Indian administration. The Charter Act of 1853 had already enlarged the Governor-General's Executive Council for legislative purposes to twelve members, namely the Governor-General and Commander-in-Chief, the four ordinary members of the Executive Council, two judges, and four representative members nominated by the government of Bengal, Madras, Bombay, and the North-West Provinces. The Indian Councils Act of 1861, which com-

pleted the change, added a fifth member to the Executive Council, and to the Legislative Council not less than six or more than twelve additional members, at least one-half non-official, to be nominated by the Governor-General. Legislative Councils were also established in the other provinces and Lieutenant-Governorships.

Thus ended the Honourable East India Company,[1] not so much from any special responsibility for the Mutiny, for in political matters it had been for many years absolutely controlled by the state, but because it was felt to be an anachronism that a private corporation should, even though it were only in name, administer so vast a dominion. 'It was created by the Crown, two hundred and fifty years before', says Marshman, 'for the purpose of extending British commerce to the East: and it transferred to the Crown on relinquishing its functions an empire more magnificent than that of Rome.'[2] This great work was not accomplished, as we have seen, without some blunders and political crimes. To disguise them and to maintain that British administrators were always swayed by impeccable motives and unerring statesmanship is to produce an unreal and impossible picture, for we are dealing after all with human agency. But when all necessary qualifications are made the annals of the Company form one of the most fascinating and illustrious pages in history. There were grave mistakes, but they were rectified, great abuses, but they were swept away. If territories were sometimes questionably acquired, they were honestly and capably administered. Of the Company's servants, Clive, Warren Hastings, Wellesley, and Dalhousie were amongst the greatest Englishmen of their day as conquerors or statesmen; others, such as Cornwallis, Bentinck, Munro, Thomason, and Metcalfe,

[1] The Company for purposes of liquidation and legal requirements maintained a formal existence until 1874.

[2] *The History of India*, J. C. Marshman, 1874, vol. iii, p. 457.

evolved in an uncongenial atmosphere a high standard of humanitarian administration.

The closer India was brought to Great Britain by improvements in communication, the steamship, the railway, and the telegraph, the more possible and the more expedient became the control of the Imperial government. In spite of his vice-regal title the head of the Indian administration after 1858 was more dependent on the Secretary of State than his predecessors had been on the Board of Control and the Court of Directors, whom an adroit Governor-General could often play off one against the other. No Governor-General under the Crown has defied the home authorities like Warren Hastings, or overridden them like Wellesley. Though it might be undoubtedly better that the state in the nineteenth century should take over the government of the Indian Empire, it is certain that only an association based on individual effort and drawing its profits from commerce could in the beginning have acquired it from so distant a base, and have toiled so patiently for results so long deferred. Gradually the political and territorial displaced the mercantile and economic character of the Company. Leadenhall Street gave place to Whitehall. The East India Company, founded by a little body of pioneer traders in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, under whom our colonial dominions had their small beginnings, ended its career in the time of Queen Victoria, under whom grew up the British Empire of to-day.

INDEX

Abbott, Punjab frontier officer, 339.
Achin, visited by James Lancaster, 1601, 25.
Adam, John, provisional Governor-General, 1823, 292, 308.
Adams, defeats Mir Kasim, 160.
Afghanistan, subdued by Akbar, 11; Tipu Sultan intrigues with Amir of, 235; Elphinstone's mission to, 273; physical features of, 311; the first Afghan war, 1839–42, 316–24. *See also* Dost Muhammad.
Agra, English agency at, 35; occupied by Lake, 1803, 257; Presidency of, established, 307.
Ahmad Shah Durrani, sacks Delhi, 1757, 137, 241; his invasion of India, 269.
Ahmadabad, English agency at, 35.
Ahmadnagar, Muhammadan kingdom of, 10, 11; captured by the British, 1803, 257.
Aix-la-Chapelle, Peace of, 1748, 103, 105.
Ajaigarh, captured by the British, 268.
Ajmer, English agency at, 35.
Akbar, Mughal Emperor, 1556–1605, 11; Midnall at court of, 22.
Akbar Khan, son of Dost Muhammad, 320, 321.
Alam Bagh, the, 375.
Albuquerque, Portuguese Viceroy, 1509–15, 16; quarrels with Magellan, 17.
Aldercron, Colonel, 134.
Aldworth, Thomas, establishes factory at Surat, 1612, 26, 35.
Alexander the Great, subdues north-western Hindustan; his death, 9; referred to, 14.
Alexander VI, Pope, Bull of, 1493, 15.
Alexandria, an emporium of eastern trade, 14; French at, capitulate, 251.
Aligarh, captured by the British, 257.
Ali Musjid, captured by the British, 322.
Ali Vardi Khan, Nawab of Bengal, 1741–56, 70, 74; his character, 129; 130, 132, 142.
Aliwal, battle of, 1846, 337.
Allahabad, entered by the British, 1764, 153; made over to the Emperor, 160, 161; restored to Oudh, 173, 174; ceded to the Company, 241; Havelock starts from, 373; proclamation at, 383.
Allard, officer of Napoleon, 310.
Almeida, Portuguese Viceroy, 1505–9, 16.
Alompra, Burman chief, 294.
Altona, India House at, 67.
Amboyna, captured by Dutch from Portuguese, 1605, 28; massacre of, 1623, 33; reparation exacted for, 34; captured by the English, 1810, 274.
Ambur, battle of, 1749, 107.
Amherst, Lord, Governor-General, 1823–8, 292–9; declares war on Burma, 296; his character, 298; later references to, 300, 303.
Amiens, Peace of, 1802, 251.
Aminchand (Omichand), deception of, by Clive, 138, 140, 163.

Amir Khan, leader of the Pindaris, 268–9, 282, 286.
Amritsar, Treaty of, 1809, 271.
Angria, Kanhoji, the corsair chief, 71, 72, 86, 147.
Anson, Commander-in-Chief, 1857, 369, 370.
Antwerp, an emporium for the Indian trade, 14; subscription books for the Ostend Company opened at, 65.
An-waru-din, Nawab of Carnatic, fights with the French, 105; killed, 1749, 107.
Apa Sahib, Raja of Berar, 284–8.
Arabia, Tipu Sultan sends envoys to, 244.
Arabians, the, conquer Sind, 10.
Arakan, 1; conquered by the Burmese, 295; ceded to the British, 297.
Aravalli range, the, a watershed, 6.
Arcot, Clive's relief of, 1751, 110, 117; captured by Haidar Ali, 197; debts of Nawab of, 195, 224.
Argaon, battle of, 1803, 257.
Arni, battle of, 110.
Aryan invasions, early, 8.
Asaf Jah, *see* Nizam-ul-Mulk.
Asaf-ud-daula, Nawab of Oudh, British treaty with, 1775, 185; relations with Warren Hastings, 208–10.
Ashti, battle of, 286.
Asirgarh, captured by the British, 287–8.
Asoka, his empire, 273–232 B.C., 9.
Assada, settlement of Courten's Association at, 40.
Assada merchants, another name for Courten's Association, 40.
Assam, 294; subjugated by the Burmese, 295, 296; a British protectorate, 298.
Assaye, battle of, 1803, 257.
Attock, seized by Ranjit Singh, 310.
Auchmuty, Sir Samuel, commander in campaign in Java, 274.
Auckland, Lord, Governor-General, 1836–42, 308–22; Afghan policy of, 312–17; later references to, 326–7, 333; his treaty with Oudh, 355–6.
Aungier, Gerald, President of Surat and Governor of Bombay, 1669–77, 77; advises armed reprisals, 43.
Aurangzeb, Mughal Emperor, 1658–1707, 12; break up of empire under, 42; English declare war on, 43; grants conditions of peace, 45–6; grants an audience to Sir William Norris, 56; relations with Norris, 57; dies, 1707, 60, 61.
Austrian succession, war of, 69, 91, 96, 98, 127.
Ava, attempt of the British to advance on, 297; British Resident leaves, 347; Dalhousie refuses to advance to, 349.
Avitabile, 310, 333.

Babar, Mughal Emperor, 1526-30, his career, 10.
Badli Sarai, battle of, 1857, 370.
Baghat, passes to British by lapse, 352–3.
Bahadur Shah I, Mughal Emperor, 1707–12, 62.
Bahadur Shah II, Mughal Emperor, 1837–58, 361, 368.
Bahour, battle of, 111.
Baillie, defeated by Haidar Ali, 1780, 196.
Baird, General, in Egypt, 1800, 251.
Baji Rao II, the last Peshwa, appeals to British Government, 254; forms subsidiary alliance with the British Government, 255; rebels and is deposed, 284–7, 352; death of, 354, 363.
Balaji Vishvanath, first Peshwa, founds a dynasty, 13.
Balasore, English established at, 38; burnt by Heath, 1686, 45.
Bandula, Burmese General, defeats British at Ramu, 296; defeated and killed, 297.
Bangalore, captured by Cornwallis, 234.

Bankibazaar (Bankipore), Ostend Company's settlement at, 67–8.
Bantam, factory established at, 25; re-established, 34; controls Madras till 1653, 38; French factory at, 92.
Baramahal, acquired by the British, 1792, 235.
Bareilly, mutiny at, 369; captured by Sir Colin Campbell, 376.
Barents, William, Dutch explorer, 17.
Barker, Sir Robert, witnesses treaty between the Rohillas and Oudh, 174, 177.
Barlow, Sir George, acting Governor-General, 1805-7, his code, 232; policy of, 237, 263; his period of office, 265–7.
Barnard, Sir Henry, Commander-in-Chief, 1857, 370; dies, 372.
Barnet, Commodore, threatens Pondicherry, 1745, 99, 100.
Barrackpore, Sepoy mutiny at, 1824, 299; incendiarism at, 1857, 366.
Barré, member of Parliament, 1766, 180,
Barrier Treaty, the, 1715, 65.
Barwell, Richard, member of Council under Warren Hastings, 182–3.
Bassein, in Burma, taken, 1852, 348.
Bassein, in western India, captured by the Marathas, 1738, 71; surrendered to the British and given back again, 192; recaptured, 193.
Bassein, Treaty of, with Peshwa, 1802, importance of, 255; results of, 256; recognized by Sindhia and Holkar, 259; later references to, 266, 268.
Batavia, founded 1619, 33; Lord Wellesley contemplates attack on, 251; occupied by the British, 1711, 274.
Baxar, battle of, 1764, 153.
Beard, John, opposes Littleton in Bengal, 56.
Beckford, member of Parliament, 1766, 180.
Bednore, captured by Tipu Sultan, 1783, 199.
Begam of Oudh, in the Mutiny, 378.
Begams of Oudh, case of, 1781–2, 208–12; charges relating to, in impeachment of Warren Hastings, 216–18.
Bellecombe, defends Pondicherry, 197.
Benares, sovereignty of, passes to the Company, 1775, 185; condition of, 1784, 214; Raja of, *see* Chait Singh; emoluments of Resident at, 224, 226; mutiny at, 369.
Bencoolen, English Presidency at, 34; duelling and drunkenness at, 79, 80, 83.
Benfield, Paul, and the Nawab of Arcot's debts, 195, 223.
Bengal, conquered, by Akbar, 11; early English settlements in, 38; loss of, by the English, 1689, 45; English return to, 46; made a separate Presidency, 1699, 56; the Nawabs of, their dealings with the English, 69–70, 131–2; commerce of, 70; relative strength of English and French in, 94–6; the key to India, 96; revolution in, Clive's first governorship of, 129–48; misgovernment in, Clive's second governorship of, 149–55; Clive's reforms in, 155–62; the Directors' belief in wealth of, 150; famine in, 1769–70, 167. *See also* under *Diwani*, Permanent settlement.
Bengal Land Act, the, 1859, 230.
Bentinck, Lord William, Governor-General, 1828–35, 300–7; Governor of Madras, 266, 292, 300; his administrative and social reforms, 301–4; relations with native powers, 304 6; with Ranjit Singh, 311, 325, 326; opinion on the first Afghan war, 317; relations with Oudh, 355; later references to, 363, 385.
Berar, Muhammadan kingdom of, 10.

[illegible] Raja of, 238–9.
[illegible] Raja.
[illegible] of Indian troops, [illegible]
[illegible] history over the [illegible] 26, 30.
[illegible] 1858, 376.
[illegible] failure before, [illegible] tured by Lord [illegible] ere, 286, 299.
[illegible] Berar, dominions [illegible] position of, in Maratha [illegible] 239, part of, in [illegible] war, 256–8; [illegible] territory, 259; disaffection, 260; aided by the British against the Pindaris, 265; [illegible] third Maratha war, [illegible] *See also* Apa Sahib.
Bhopal, disturbances in, 306.
Bickerton, Sir R., British admiral, 1782, 199.
Bidar, Muhammadan kingdom of, 10.
Bijapur, Muhammadan kingdom of, 10; submits to the Mughals, 12.
Bird, Robert, his settlement of the North-West Provinces, 303.
Bithur, Baji Rao II a prisoner at, 286.
'Black Hole' of Calcutta, the, 1756, 133.
Board of Control, established by Pitt's Act, 1784, 216; abolished, 1858, 382; referred to, 278, 306.
Bolan Pass, the, 2.
Bombay, harbour of, 7; ceded by Portugal to Charles II, 1661, 30; becomes chief English settlement, 1687, 37, 41; surrendered by Charles II to the Company, 1668, 41; besieged by the natives, 1686, 45; history of, 1708–46, 70–1; strongest of the Presidency towns, 1746, 71; styled a colony, English women sent to, 76; early governors of, 77; hospital and church at, &c., 78; slaves for, 82; superior to French settlements on western coast, 94; as affected by the Regulating Act, 1773, 191.
Bonaparte. *See* Napoleon.
Boscawen, Admiral, besieges Pondicherry, 1748, 103–4; referred to, 108.
Boston, Company's tea thrown into sea at, 1775, 181.
Both, Dutch Governor-General, 1609–14, 32.
Boughton, Gabriel, obtains licence to trade in Bengal, 1650, 38.
Bourbon, Isle of, acquired by the French, 1657, 94; value of, 95; developed by La Bourdonnais, 99; captured by the British, 1810, restored, 1815, 274.
Brahmanical Hinduism, 8, 9.
Brahmaputra river, the, 3.
Braithwaite, defeated by Tipu Sultan, 1782, 198.
Brazil, discovery, of, 16.
Bristow, Resident at Lucknow, 210.
Broach, captured by the British, 257.
Bruges, an emporium of eastern trade, 14.
Bruyninx, Dutch minister at Brussels, 65.
Brydon, Dr., sole survivor of retreat from Kabul, 321.
Buddewal, battle of, 1846, 337.
Buddhism, rise of, 8, 9.
Bundi, treaty with, 285.
Burdwan, acquired by the British, 151.
Burgoyne, 144, 163; his strictures on Clive, 164–5; surrenders at Saratoga, 1777, 193.
Burhanpur, English agency at, 35.
Burke, Edmund, quoted on Surman's embassy, 62; on Clive, 165; on Warren Hastings, 171, 175, 176; on the ravaging of the Carnatic, 196; his part in impeachment of Warren Hastings, 216–19; on the Company's servants, 224; referred to, 214, 304.

Burma, nature of the country, 296. *See* Burmese, the.
Burmese, the, 275; their conquests, 294, 295; threats to the British, 295; first Burmese war, 1824–6, 296–8; second Burmese war, 1852, 347–9.
Burnes, Alexander, Captain, afterwards Sir, goes up Indus to Lahore, 311, 324; view of Peshawar question, 314; mission to Kabul, 315–6; in Afghan campaign, 318; murdered, 1841, 320.
Bushire, captured by the British, 360.
Bussy, quoted, 61; takes Jinji, 108; his achievements in the Deccan, 109; opposes policy of Dupleix, 111, 115; summoned to Madras, 121; at variance with Lally, 121–2; captured at Wandiwash, 122; danger of his aiding Siraj-ud-daula, 136; views of, 124; returns to India, 1783, 198–9.
Bute, Marquess of, 123.

Cabot, John, discovers Newfoundland, 1497, 15.
Cachar, annexed, 1832, 305.
Calcutta, site of, at Sutanati, 45; founded by Charnock, 1690, 46; Fort William built at, 61, 70; strength of, compared with Chandarnagar, 94, 129; captured by Siraj-ud-daula, 1856, 133; Black Hole of, the, 133; recovered, 135.
Calicut, Vasco da Gama at, 1498, 15.
Camoens, the poet, 16.
Campbell, Sir Archibald, occupies Rangoon, 296–7.
Campbell, Sir Colin, afterwards Lord Clyde, his relief of Lucknow, 1857, 375; his campaign in Oudh and Rohilkhand, 375–6, 379.
Canning, George, on Charter Act of 1814, 278; President of Board of Control, 282; accepts and resigns governor-generalship, 292.
Canning, Lord, Governor-General, 1856–62, 353, 359; character of, 359; prevents surrender of Peshawar, 372; his Oudh proclamation, 376; proclaims peace, 377; nicknamed 'Clemency Canning', 380.
Carlyle, Thomas, on Ostend Company, 67.
Carnac, Colonel, one of Clive's Select Committee, 155.
Carnatic, the, boundaries of, 73; the war in, 105–19; administration taken over by Lord Wellesley, 1801, 244, 247–8; sovereignty of, absorbed by Lord Dalhousie, 1853, 354.
Caron, founds French factory at Surat, 1668, 92.
Cartier, Governor of Bengal, 1770–2, 167.
'Cartridges, the greased,' 362, 366–7.
Cartwright, Ralph, establishes stations in Bengal and Orissa, 1633, 38.
Caste, system, the, 8.
Castlereagh, Lord, afterwards Marquess of Londonderry, President of Board of Control, criticizes Lord Wellesley's policy, 255, 260; suicide of, 292.
Catherine of Braganza, Bombay part of her dowry, 30.
Cawnpore, Mutiny at, 369; siege of, 373; massacre of, 374, 380.
Ceylon, Dutch capture Portuguese posts in, 1658, 28.
Chait Singh, Raja of Benares, requisitions on, 201–4; deposition of, 204; case of, considered, 204–8, 211, 214; charges relating to, at the impeachment, 216–18.
Champion, Colonel, commander in Rohilla war, 175–6, 185.
Chandarnagar, French factory founded at, 1674, 92; compared with Calcutta, 94; progress of, 96, 116; captured by the British,

1757, 127, 136–7; retaken, 1778, 197.
Chanda Sahib, Nawab of the Carnatic, supported by Dupleix, 107–11; murdered by Raja of Tanjore, 111.
Changama, Pass of, British victory at, 1767, 169; Haidar Ali invades Carnatic by, 1780, 195.
Charles I, of England, treaty of, with Portugal, 1642, 30; fails to get reparation from the Dutch, 34; grants a licence to Courten's Association, 1635, 39, 40.
Charles II, of England, receives Bombay from Portugal, 1661, 30; grants charters, and surrenders Bombay, to the Company, 41; his wars with Holland, 42.
Charles II, of Spain, death of, 63.
Charles V, Emperor, 17.
Charles VI, of Austria, founds the Ostend Company, 63–5; abandons the Company, 66–7.
Charnock, Job, quoted, 42–3; founds Calcutta, 1690, 46, 70.
Charter Acts, of 1781, 214; of 1793, 225, 236; of 1813, 276–9; of 1833, 306–8; of 1853, 382–4.
Charters of the East India Company, of 1600, 23; of 1609, 26; of 1657, 40; of 1661 and 1683, 41; of 1686, 44, 49; of 1693, 50.
Chatham, Lord. *See* William Pitt, the elder.
Chauth, Maratha blackmail, 13.
Child, Sir John, President of Surat and Governor of Bombay, 1682–90, 44; seizes Mughal shipping, 45; dies, 1690, 46.
Child, Sir Josia, four times governor of the Company, 44; his autocratic power, 48–9; quoted, 49; spends £80,000 in bribes, 50.
Chilianwala, battle of, 1849, 342–3, 346.
China, East India Company's trade with, 279; trade with, surrendered, 1834, 306–7.
Chinsura, Dutch settlement in Bengal, 129; surrender of, to the British, 141.
Chittagong, Directors order the capture of, 1686, 45; acquired by the British, 151; claimed by the Burmese, 294–5.
Chitu, Pindari leader, 286.
Chunar, Hastings escapes to, 204; Trimbakji imprisoned at, 287.
Clavering, Lieutenant-General, one of the councillors in Bengal under Warren Hastings, 182–4, 186, 188–9, 191.
Clive, Robert, afterwards Lord, 101, 115; his relief of Arcot, 110, 117; sails to Bengal, 120; sends Forde to the Northern Circars, 121; procures imperial decree for the Northern Circars, 123; services in southern India, 126, 128; Governor of Fort St. David, 134; recovers Bengal, 1757, 134–6; takes Chandarnagar, 136–7; deceives Aminchand, 138–9; wins battle of Plassey, 1757, 139–40; first governorship of Bengal, 141; takes Chinsura, 141; Clive's work and conduct, 142–8; departure for Europe, 149–50; second governorship of Bengal, 154–62; acquires *Diwani*, 155, 158–9; internal reforms and foreign policy, 156–62; leaves India for last time, 162; before Select Committee, 163, 181; Clive and Parliament, 164; his death and character, 165–6; his letter to Pitt, 179; his *jagir*, 146–7, 154, 155, 158, 161, 163, 181, 223; later references to, 173, 218, 223, 243, 385.
Cochin, Portuguese factory at, 16.
Coen, Dutch Governor-General, founds Batavia, 1619, 33.
Coimbatore, acquired by the British, 1799, 246.
Colbert, and the French Company of 1664, 92, 125.
Colebrook, helps to procure Ostend Company's charter, 64.
Colebrook, Sir Edward, quoted, 144.

Columbus, Christopher, discovers West Indies and South America, 1492, 15.
Combermere, Lord, takes Bharatpur, 1826, 299.
Condore, French defeated at, by Forde, 1758, 121.
Constantinople, an emporium of eastern trade, 14; Tipu Sultan sends envoys to, 234, 244.
Coorg, sovereignty of, passes to the British, 235; Raja of, deposed, 305.
Coote, Sir Eyre, defeats Lally at Wandiwash, 1760, 122; pursues Law into Oudh, 137 *note*; votes for battle before Plassey, 139; advocates march to Delhi, 161; operations of in southern India, 1781–83, 197–9; dies, 1783, 199; criticizes Warren Hastings, 207.
Copenhagen, battle of, 1801, 272.
Cornelis, Dutch defeated at, 274.
Cornwallis, Lord, Governor-General, 1786–93 and 1805, referred to, 160; on Sir Elijah Impey, 213–14; letter from Dundas to, 217; first governor-generalship, 220–36; internal reforms and permanent settlement of Bengal, 162, 172, 222–32; his foreign policy and war with Tipu Sultan of Mysore, 225, 232–6; reappointed Governor-General, 1797, but resigns, 242; referred to, 247, 254; his second governor-generalship, 261–5; later references to, 283, 289, 302, 385.
Cossimbazar, English factory at, seized, 1686, 45; seized by Siraj-ud-daula, 1756, 133; Jean Law at, 137; cession of, demanded by the Burmese, 295.
Cotton, Sydney, in the Punjab, 370.
Cotton, Sir Willoughby, invades Afghanistan, 318.
Council, functions of a, 88–9.
Court, General, European officer of Ranjit Singh, 310; expelled, 333.
Courten, Sir William, 39.
Courten's Association, gains licence for eastern trade, 39; settlement of, at Assada, 40; united with East India Company, 40.
Courthope, Nathaniel, defends Pulo Run, 1616–20, 31.
Covelong (Coblon) Ostend Company's settlement at, 67, 68.
Coveripak, battle of, 110.
Covilham, Pedro de, reaches Malabar, 15.
Cromwell, Oliver, makes treaty with Portugal, 1654, 30, 34; his charter to the East India Company, 1657, 40.
Cuddalore, captured by Haidar Ali, 1782, 198.
Cultru, Prosper, quoted, 104, 113–14, 116.
Cunningham, Sir H. S., quoted, 382.
Cunningham, Sir James, granted licence for Indian trade, 1617, 50–51.
Cuttack, acquired by the British, 1804, 259.

Daba, battle of, 1843, 329.
Dacca, cession of, demanded by the Burmese, 295.
D'Aché, French admiral, quarrels with Lally, 121–2.
Dalhousie, Lord, Governor-General, 1848–56, compared with Wellesley, 243; his period of office, 340–58; his criticism of Gough's strategy, 343; his Punjab policy, 344–6; his Burmese policy and the second Burmese war, 347–9; his use of doctrine of lapse, 350–4; his annexation of Oudh, 1856, 161, 354–6; his internal reforms, 300, 356; alleged responsibility for the Mutiny, 357, 361; his opponents, and controversy with Sir Charles Napier, 358; later references to, 359, 362, 365, 385.

Daman, Portuguese factory at, 16.
Darien, Isthmus of, occupied by the Scottish Company, 52.
Darius, subdues Indus valley, *c.* 500 B.C., 9.
Davenant, Charles, quoted, 48.
Davis, the explorer, 17.
Day, Francis, founds Fort St. George, 1640, 37; prevents abandonment of Bengal factories, 38.
de Boigne, European officer in service of Sindhia, 239, 258.
Deccan, the, meaning of the term, 2 and *note*; description of, 6; relation to Mughal emperors, 12.
de Kerjean, defeated by Lawrence at Bahour, 111.
de la Hay, French admiral, driven from Trincomali, 1673, 92.
de Lally. *See* Lally.
Delhi, early dynasties of, 10; Surman's embassy at, 61–2; proposal that the British should march to, 161; Marathas conduct Shah Alam to, 1771, 173; Sindhia loses and regains control of, 240; battle of, 1803, 257; taken under British protection, 244, 257; seized by the Mutineers, 1857, 368; siege of, 369–70; capture of, 372.
Delta of the Ganges, 3.
De Merveille, supposed to have suggested Ostend Company, 64.
Deogaon, Treaty of, 258.
de Prié, Marquess, Governor of the Netherlands, 65.
Derajat, subdued by Ranjit Singh, 310.
De Suffrein, French admiral, lands French troops, 198; his naval engagements with Hughes, 1782–3, 199.
Diaz, Bartholomew, rounds Cape of Good Hope, 1486, 15.
Dig, battle of, 1804, 261.
Dindigul, acquired by the British, 1792, 235.
Dinkar Rao, Sir, minister of Sindhia, 332, 378–9.
Diu, Portuguese factory at, 16.
Divi, made over to the French, 108; to be surrendered conditionally to the English, 113.
Diwan, finance officer, 11; Directors determine 'to stand forth as Diwan', 11.
Diwani of Bengal, acquired by the Company, 1765, 155, 158, 159, 169, 179, 180, 194, 227, 248.
Donabew, Bandula killed at, 297.
Dost Ali, Nawab of Carnatic, slain, 1740, 74.
Dost Muhammad, Amir of Afghanistan, 311; eager for British alliance, 313, 314; Lord Auckland drives him into arms of Russia, 315–16; British expedition to depose him, 316–20; re-establishes his power, 324; Sikh alliance with, 342, 344; British treaties with, 1855 and 1857, 360, 369, 370; remains friendly in the Mutiny, 369, 378.
Downton, Captain Nicholas, his victory over the Portuguese, 1614–15, 30, 36.
Drake, Sir Francis, his voyage round the world, 1579, 18, 21, 31.
Drake, Governor of Calcutta, 133.
Dravidians, the, or tribes of the south, 9.
Du Bois, John, treasurer of the Old Company, 52, 54.
Dudley, Sir Robert, sends squadron to India, 1596, 22.
Duelling in India prohibited, 78, 79.
Duff, Grant, Resident at Satara, 289.
Dulip Singh, Sikh Maharaja, 333, 345.
Dumas, Governor of Pondicherry, 96, 97.
Dundas, Henry, President of the Board of Control, 217, 222, 228, 236, 237, 242–3, 254.
Dupleix, Governor of Chandarnagar, 1731–41, 95–7; Gover-

nor-General of Pondicherry, 1741–54, 100; quarrels with La Bourdonnais, 101–5; his policy, 106; takes part in native politics, 107; his overlordship of southern India, 108; at height of his power, 1751, 109; decline of, 110–11; recall of, 1754, 112; his charges against Godeheu, 113–17; his over-sanguine temperament, 115; failure of his policy, 116–18; treatment of, at hands of the Company, 117; character of, 119; later references to, 120, 124, 125, 127.

Dutch, their efforts to share in the Indian trade, 18; prevail over the English in the Far East, 19; their restrictive colonial policy, 19; English model themselves upon the Dutch pattern, 20; rivalry of, with the English, 24, 26–7, 35, 37–8; their early expeditions to the East, 24; oppose Sir Henry Middleton, 25; relations of, with English and Portuguese, 29–34; union between the English and Dutch companies, 1619, 32–3; Dutch perpetrate the massacre of Amboyna, 1623, 33–4; criticized by Sir Thomas Roe, 36; wars of, with England and France, 42; help to patrol the pilgrim route to Mecca, 57; naval supremacy of, 63; renegade Dutch serve with the Ostenders, 63; opposed to Ostend Company, 64–5, 67–9; capture St. Thomé, 1672, and Pondicherry, 1693, 92; considered strongest European nation in India, 1718, 97; Dutch news-sheets, 118; their settlement at Chinsura, 129, 132; attacked and disarmed by Clive, 1759, 141–2; intrigues of, with Mir Jafar, 146; war declared with, 1781, 198; in alliance with France, 251; attack on Dutch eastern possessions by Lord Minto, 274, 275.

Duvelaer, Director of the French Company, 112.

East India Company:

(1) The Old or London East India Company, founded, 1600, 23; its task, 24; its first voyages, 25–6; its difficulties under Charles I, 38–40; dealings with Cromwell, 40–41; its prosperity at the Restoration, 41–2; its struggle with the New Company, 54–7; its union with the New Company, 1702, 58; union consummated by Godolphin's award, 1708, 59.

(2) The New or London East India Company, 47–59; founded, 1698, 52–3; its need of capital, 54; its servants in the East, 55–7; its fortunes in India, 56; union with the Old Company, 58–9.

(3) The United East India Company, founded, 1708, 59; protest of, against its abolition, 380–2; its functions taken over by the Crown, 382–3; its great work, 385–6.

Edwardes, Sir Herbert, quoted, 317; in the Punjab, 1846, 339; defeats Mulraj, 341–2; negotiates treaties with Dost Muhammad, 360; services in the Mutiny, 370, 372, 379.

Egypt, Indian army sent to, by Lord Wellesley, 251.

Elizabeth, Queen, contemporary with Akbar, 11; makes war with Spain, 18; declares the ocean is free to all, 1580, 21; leaves much to private enterprise, 24.

Ellenborough, Lord, Governor-General, 1842–4, quoted, 307; President of Board of Control, 311; period of office as Governor-General, 322–32; bombastic proclamation of, 324; his dealings with Gwalior, 330–32; recalled by the Directors, 332; later references to, 334, 344.

Elphinstone, General, commander of troops in Kabul, 319–21.
Elphinstone, Mountstuart, sent to Kabul, 273, 311; Resident at Poona, 284, 289; defeats Marathas at Kirki, 1817, 285; his services to Indian people, 301, 303; views on suttee, 303; declines governor-generalship, 308; his opinion on the Afghan war, 317.
England, General, defeated at Hakalzai, 322.
England, the pirate, 71.
Eugene, Prince, and the Ostend Company, 64.
Everest, Mount, 1.

Farghana, 10.
Farruckhabad, battle of, 1804, 261.
Farrukhsiyar, Mughal Emperor, 1712–19, grants privileges to Surman's embassy, 62.
Fenton, Edward, fails to round the Cape, 21.
Ferozeshah, battle of, 1845, 336.
Fitch, travels in India, 1583–91, 21, 22, 23.
Fiume, 63, 67.
Flacourt, colonizes Madagascar, 98.
Fleury, Cardinal, 98.
Forde, Colonel, storms Masulipatam, 1759, 121; defeats the Dutch, 1759, 141; his end, 181.
Forrest, Sir G. W., on Chait Singh, 205 *note*; on Begams of Oudh, 209–10.
Fort St. David, English at, appeal to the French, 69; taken by Lally, 120; Clive Governor of, 134.
Fort St. George. *See* Madras.
Fort William. *See* Calcutta.
Fox, C. J., 214; his India Bills, 215; manager of impeachment of Warren Hastings, 217.
Foxcroft, imprisoned by Sir Edward Winter, 77.
Francis, Sir Philip, venom of, 175; appointed to Bengal council, 1773, 182; his prejudices, 183; attacks on, and duel with, Warren Hastings, 184; his action in the business of Nandkumar, 186, 188–90; his influence in foreign affairs, 191–3; Hastings refers to, 214; his part in the impeachment of Hastings, 216–17.
Frederick IV of Denmark, sets up an India House at Altona, 67.
French, the, in India, observe neutrality in the Spanish succession war, 69; attempt to found colonies in India, 75; waste powder in salutes, 80; early French Companies, 91; Colbert's Company, early French settlements, wars with Holland, 92; Perpetual Company of the Indies, 1720, 94; position of, in relation to the English, 94–5; French Company dependent on state patronage, 95–6; commerce of, compared with that of the English, 97–8; hostilities of, with the English to 1748, 98–104; relations of, with English on the Coromandel coast, 1748–54, 105–19; their attack on English in southern India, 1758, 120–1; victory of English over, 122–3; French Company suspended, 1769, re-established, 1785, 123; general reasons for French defeat, 124–8; in Bengal, 129–30; defeated by Clive, 136–7; in correspondence with Siraj-ud-daula, 139; French agent at Poona, 1777, 193; declare war on England, 1778, their settlements taken, 197; naval engagements of, with the English, 198–9; Tipu Sultan's intrigues with, 235, 244; possessions of, again occupied in the Revolutionary war, 1793, 236; disbandment of the Nizam's French force, 245–6; Wellesley counteracts French designs, 250–1: possible Maratha-French alliance, 255; danger of French attacking India through Persia, 270–1, 273–4.
Friedland, battle of, 1807, 272.

Frobisher, voyages of, 17.
Fullarton, campaign in Mysore, 1783, 199.
Fulta, fugitives from Calcutta at, 133–5.
Fyzabad, servants of Begams of Oudh coerced at, 209.

Gaikwars, of Baroda, Maratha dynasty of, 195; dominions of, 238; relations of, with the British, 239; stipulation as to, in Treaty of Bassein, 255; the Gaikwar holds aloof from second Maratha war, 256; his minister murdered, 284.
Gama, Vasco da, reaches Calicut, 1498; referred to, 16.
Gambling in India, 81, 82.
Gandak river, the, 3.
Ganges, the, 3.
Gardanne, General, sent by Napoleon to Teheran, 272.
Garhwal, surrendered to the British, 1816, 281.
Gawilgarh, captured by the British, 1803, 257.
Gayer, Sir John, President of Surat, imprisoned, 56.
General Service Enlistment Act, the, 1856, 365–6.
General Society, the, founded, 1698, 52.
Genoa, an emporium of eastern trade, 14.
George III, forces dissolution of Parliament, 215, quoted, 237.
Ghats, Eastern and Western, 6, 7.
Ghazipur, Cornwallis dies at, 1805, 265.
Ghazni, taken by the Turks, A.D. 862, 10; stormed, 1839, 318; fortifications of, destroyed, 323.
Gheria, capture of, 1756, 71, 147.
Ghilzais, Afghan tribe, 321.
Ghor, Muhammad of, his invasions of India, 1175–1206, 10.
Gillespie, General, defeats French in Java, 274; killed in Gurkha war, 280.
Goa, acquired by the Portuguese, 1510, 16; blockaded by the Dutch, 28; occupied by the British, 274.
Goalundo, Brahmaputra joins the Ganges at, 3.
Godavari river, the, 6.
Goddard, Colonel, his march across India, 1780, 193; premature advance on Poona, 1781, 194.
Godeheu, sent to supersede Dupleix, his provisional treaty, 113, 115–16; charges of Dupleix against him, 113–17.
Godolphin, Earl, his award, 1708, 59.
Godwin, General, Commander-in-Chief in second Burmese war, 1852, 348.
Gogra, river, 3.
Gokla, General of the Peshwa, 286.
Golab Singh, Raja of Jammu, 339.
Golconda, Muhammadan kingdom of, 10; conquered by Aurangzeb, 72.
Gombroon, English settle in, 30.
Gosfright, Captain, blockades Ostend ships, 1730, 68.
Gough, Sir Hugh, afterwards Viscount, victor of Maharajpur, 1843; at Mudki and Ferozeshah, 1845, 336; strategy of, in first Sikh war, 338; cautious advice of, 341; at Chilianwala, 1849, 342; wins battle of Gujrat, 343; strategy of, in second Sikh war, 342–4.
Govindgar, Mutiny at, 1849, 365.
Grenville, Earl, on Charter Act of 1813, 278–9.
Grey, General, wins battle of Paniar, 1843, 331.
Gujarat, conquered by Akbar, 11.
Gujrat, battle of, 1849, 343–4.
Gurkhas, of Nepal, their encroachments, 275; their origin, 279–80; Nepalese war, 1814–16, 280–1.
Guru Govind Singh, the Sikh prophet and martyr, 269.
Gwalior, escaladed by Popham, 1780, 194; Chait Singh flies to,

204; disturbances and revolutions in, 306, 330; defeat of army of, 1843, 331; becomes a protected state, 331–2; mutinous contingent of, 375–6; recaptured by Sir Hugh Rose, 1858, 377.

Hafiz Rahmat Khan, Rohilla chief, his treaty with Oudh, 1772, 174; defeated and killed, 1774, 175; mild rule of, 178.
Haidar Ali of Mysore, relations with British, 1765–8, 168–9; dictates peace to British, 170; war with, 1780–2, 192, 195–8; ravages Carnatic, 1780, 195; dies, 1782, 198; treaty with, 1769, 233, 235.
Hakalzai, General England surrenders at, 322.
Hakra, the vanished river, 6.
Hamilton, Alexander, quoted, 96.
Hamilton, William, procures privileges for the Company, 62.
Hanseatic League, cities of, and eastern trade, 14.
Hardinge, Sir Henry, afterwards Viscount, Governor-General, 1844–8, 333–40; takes office of second-in-command under Gough, 336; enters Lahore, 338; reduces military expenditure, 340; his warning to Nawab of Oudh, 1847, 355; planned first Indian railway, 356.
Harland, Sir Robert, plenipotentiary sent to Nawab of Carnatic, 194.
Harris, General, afterwards Lord, conquers Tipu Sultan and takes Seringapatam, 1799, 245–6.
Harrison, Edward, Governor of Madras, 90.
Harsha of Kanauj, his empire, 9.
Hastings, Warren, noble conduct of, 152; compared with Clive, 166, 167; administration of, 170–219; controversy on his career, 170–1; internal reforms of, 171–2; his settlement with the Mughal Emperor and Oudh, 173–4; witholds tribute hitherto paid to emperor, 173; Hastings and the Rohilla war, 174–8; position altered by Regulating Act, 1773, 179; his relations with his Council, 180–4; quarrel with Clavering as to his resignation, 1777, 184; disables Francis in a duel, 1780, 184; Council attack him for Rohilla war, 185; Hastings and Nandkumar, 185–90; his wars in western and southern India, 191–200; his limited control over Madras and Bombay, 191; terrible position of, in 1780–1, 197; vigorous action of, 197; disapproves of Treaty of Mangalore, 1784, 200; his dealings with Chait Singh and the Begams of Oudh, 201–12; in peril, flies to Chunar, 204; his conduct considered, 204–12; makes Sir Elijah Impey President of *Sadr Diwani Adalat*, 212–3; leaves India, 214; impeachment of, 214–19; financial administration of, 222–3, 224; gives evidence before Parliament, 1814; later references to, 231, 243, 247, 262, 385, 386.
Hastings, Marquess of, formerly Earl of Moira, Governor-General, 1814–23, modifies judicial reforms of Cornwallis, 231; completes Lord Wellesley's work, 244; his period of office, 276–91; his war with Nepal, 279–82; war with Pindaris, and third Maratha war, 282–8; moderation of his policy, 288; civil reforms of, 288–90; his transactions with Palmer & Co., 290; compared with Lord Wellesley, 290, 291; later references to, 295, 308, 352, 354.
Havelock, Sir Henry, campaigns of, in the Mutiny, 364, 373–5; enters Cawnpore, and relieves Lucknow, 374; dies at Lucknow, 1857, 375; his services, 379.

Hawkins, Captain, at Court of Jahangir, 25–6; failure to settle in Surat, 26, 35.
Heath, Captain, rescues the English in Bengal, 1688, 45.
Heathcote, Gilbert, interloper, 50.
Hébert, Governor of Pondicherry, 69.
Hedges, William, Governor of Bengal factories, 1681–4, 77; diary of, 78.
Henry, Prince, the Navigator, 15.
Henry IV of France, charters French companies, 91.
Herat, 311; siege of, 1837, 312; importance of, 314; siege raised, 317; Macnaghten's schemes against, 320; occupied by Persian forces but evacuated, 1856, 360.
Heytesbury, Lord, appointment as Governor-General cancelled, 1836, 308.
Himalayas, 1, 2.
Hinduism. *See* Brahmanical Hinduism.
Hindu Kush Mountains, 1.
Hindustan, meaning of the term, 2, and *note*; great plains of, 3.
Hippon, Captain, founds a factory at Masulipatam, 1611, 37.
Hislop, Sir Thomas, commands in Deccan against the Pindaris, 283.
Hobhouse, Sir John, President of Board of Control, 316, 329.
Hodson, Major, in Punjab, 339; shoots the Delhi princes, 372.
Holdernesse, Earl of, 112.
Holdich, Sir T. H., quoted, 314.
Holkar, Maratha dynasty of, at Indore, general of Maratha confederacy, 236; dominions of, 238; relations of with Peshwa and Sindhia, 239–40; part of Jaswant Rao Holkar in the second Maratha war, 254–6, 258–61, 264–5, 266; relations of, with Amir Khan, 268–9, with Ranjit Singh, 270; part of Holkar's government in third Maratha war, 284–6; territory of, curtailed, 286–8; loyal in the Mutiny, 378.
Holland. *See* Dutch, the.
Holmes, T. R. E., quoted, 229, 379.
Holwell, in Black Hole of Calcutta, 1856, 133; advises deposition of Mir Jafar, 150, 151.
Hore, voyage of, 17.
Houtman, Cornelius, voyage of, 1596, 22.
Hughes, Sir Edward, his sea-fights with de Suffrein, 198–9.
Hughli, river, the, 71; European settlements on, 129, 135.
Hughli, town, English factory at, 1650, 38; bombarded by the English, 1686, 45; surrendered to the British, 1757, 135.
Humayun, Mughal Emperor, 1530–40, 1555–6, 10, 11.
Hume, Alexander, of the Ostend Company, 66, 68.
Hunter, Sir W. W., quoted, 31, 39, 49, 172.
Huskisson, attacks the Company's privileges, 306.
Hyderabad. *See* Nizam of.
Hyderabad (Sind), Amir of, 325; British Resident at, 326; Residency at, attacked, 1842, 329.

Ibrahim, Sultan, defeated by Babar, 10.
Imangarh, seized by Sir Charles Napier, 1842, 328.
Impey, Sir Elijah, appointed Chief Justice in Bengal, 1773, 182; his part in the trial of Nandkumar, 187–90; made President of the *Sadr Diwani Adalat*; unpopularity of, 213–14.
Inam Commission, the, 363.
Indian Councils Act, 1861, 384.
Indus, river, 3.
Inglis, his defence of Lucknow, 374.
Innes, A. D., quoted, 329, 351.
Isle of Bourbon. *See* Bourbon.
Isle of France. *See* Mauritius.
Ives, Edward, quoted, 114.

Jackson, Coverly, Chief Commissioner of Oudh, 1856, 364.
Jagdalak, rear-guard action at, 321; Afghans defeated by Pollock at, 1842, 323.
Jahandar Shah, Mughal Emperor, 1712, 62.
Jahangir, Mughal Emperor, 1605–27, 11, 12; his Court visited by Captain Hawkins, 25–6; his Court visited by Roe, 36.
Jainism, rise and decline of, 8, 9.
Jaipur, Raja of, his territory plundered by Holkar, 260; given up to Holkar, 266; treaty concluded with, 285.
Jaitpur, passes to British by lapse, 1849, 352.
Jalalabad, Sir Robert Sale at, 320; defence of, 321; relief of, 322–3.
James I of England, compared with Jahangir, 11; puts pressure upon the Company, 32: fails to get reparation from the Dutch, 34; grants licence for Indian trade to Sir James Cunningham, 1617, 50.
Jang Bahadur, Minister of Nepal, 376.
Jansens, General, French commander in Java, 274–5.
Java, conquered from the Dutch, 1811, 274; restored to Holland, 1816, 275.
Jeffreys, Judge, decides for the Company in the Sandys case, 1683, 49.
Jhansi, passes to British by lapse, 1853, 352; Rani of, massacres English, 369, dies, 377; her ability as a leader, 378–9.
Jinji, Raja of, 69; taken by the French, 108.
Jodhpur, treaty with, 285.
John IV of Portugal, makes treaty with Charles I, 1642, 30.
Johnstone, member of Council in Bengal, 223.
Jones, Sir Harford, sent to Persia by the Home Government, 1799, 273.
Julius II, Pope, Bull of, 1506, 15.
Jullundur Doab, given up to British, 1846, 338.
Jumna, the, 3.

Kabul, taken by Babar, 10; Tipu Sultan sends envoys to, 244; geographical situation of, Dost Muhammad established at, 311; Burnes sent to, 315; Burnes leaves, 316; Russia recalls her agents from, 317; Shah Shuja enters, 1839, 318; English troops in, 319; the retreat from Kabul, 1841–2, 320–1; reoccupied by the British, 323; finally evacuated, 324.
Kali, the goddess, 303.
Kalinjar, captured by the British, 268.
Kanara, acquired by the British, 1799, 246.
Kanarese, ancient Dravidian language, 9.
Kandahar, recovered by Akbar, 11; its situation, 311; occupied by the British, 1839, 318; Nott ordered to abandon, 322.
Karachi, seaport of Sind, 1, 7.
Karakoram Mountains, 1.
Karauli, Dalhousie's proposal to annex, by lapse, overruled, 351–3.
Karical, acquired by the French, 1739, 94.
Karnal, Anson dies at, 370.
Karrack, British expedition to, 1838, 317.
Kashmir, conquered by Akbar, 11; conquered by Ranjit Singh, 1819, 310; ceded to Golab Singh, 338.
Kashmir Gate, the, at Delhi, blown in, 372.
Katmandu, British attack on, repelled, 280.
Kaveri river, the, 6.
Kaye, quoted, 159.
Keane, Sir John, Commander-in-Chief in Afghan war, 318.
Keigwin, rebellion of, 1683–4, 43, 90.
Khaipur, Amir of, 325.

siege raised, 122; consultations at, on loss of Calcutta, 1756, 134; relations of, with Muhammad Ali, and the Nizam, 168–70, 194; as affected by the Regulating Act, 1773, 191; folly of Presidency of, 193–4, 199, 232; pestilential moral atmosphere of, 195; government of, oppose Wellesley, 245; evil reputation of Company's servants at, 247; settlement of land revenues at, 289.
Madrid, Treaty of, 1630, 30.
Magellan, Ferdinand, his great voyage, 17.
Mahan, Captain, quoted, 127–8.
Mahanadi, river, 3, 6.
Maharajpur, battle of, 1843, 331.
Maharashtra, home of the Marathas, 12.
Mahmud of Ghazni, his invasions of India, A.D. 997–1026, 10.
Malabar acquired by the British, 1792, 235.
Malacca, Portuguese factory at, 16; seized by the Dutch, 1641, 28.
Malavalli, battle of, 1799, 245.
Malayalam, ancient Dravidian language, 9.
Malcolm, Sir John, quoted, 148, 223, 237, 240; disbands the Nizam's French force, 245; his mission to Persia, 1800, 252, 272; second mission to Persia, 273; opposes abolition of commercial monopoly, 277; grants pension to Baji Rao, 286, 354, 362; his brilliant services, 289.
Malleson, Colonel, quoted, 118.
Malwa conquered by Akbar, 11.
Mangalore captured by Tipu Sultan, 200.
Mangalore, Treaty of, 1784, 200, 233, 235.
Manipur, Burmese recognize independence of, 297, 298.
Mansel, Charles, in the Punjab, 345.
Marathas, the, rise of, 12; outline of their history, 13; Aurangzeb's campaign against, 56, 72; growing power of, 60–1; attacks of, on English and Portuguese settlements, 70–1; invade Carnatic, 73; plunder Bengal, 74, 130; take part in the war of the Carnatic, 110; support Dupleix, 111; power of the Peshwa, 149; Maratha threat to Bengal, 162; British relations with, 168–70; relations of, with Oudh and Rohilkhand, 172–4; Warren Hastings's Maratha wars, 192–4, 195–8, 202; Macpherson's overtures to, 220; Cornwallis's alliance with, 234–6, 238; dominions and powers of the Maratha confederacy, 238–40; defeat the Nizam, 1795, 241; Lord Wellesley's treaties and wars with, 244–6, 252–61; dealings of Cornwallis and Barlow with, 263–6; power of, weakened, 268; power of, over Sirhind, 270; Lord Hastings's war with, 282–9; Maratha states and the doctrine of lapse, 352–4, 362; effect of mutiny on, 361, 363.
Maria Theresa, 66.
Marlborough, Duke of, compared with Clive, 143, 148.
Marshman, J. C., quoted, 171, 228–9, 385.
Martaban captured, 1852, 348.
Martin, François, founds Pondicherry, 1674, 92; dies, 1706, 96.
Martin, Matthew, Captain, 88.
Martindale, General, checked at Jytak, 280.
Master, Sir Streynsham, President of Madras, 1677–81, 77.
Masulipatam, factory at, 1611, 37; seized by the natives, 1680, 45; French factory at, 92; captured by the French, 108; proposed cession of, to the English, 113; stormed by Forde, and ceded to the English, 1759, 121; treaty of, 1768, 169, 232–3.
Mauritius (Isle of France), acquired

by the French, 1721, 94; value of, 95; work of La Bourdonnais in, 99; Bussy detained at, 198; relations of Tipu Sultan with Governor of, 244; Wellesley's projected expedition against, 251; captured by the British, 1810, 274.
McNeill, British minister to Persia, 1836, 313.
Medows, General, his campaign against Tipu Sultan, 1790, 234.
Meerut, disaffection at, 366–7; outbreak of Mutiny at, 1857, 368.
Mehidpur, battle of, 1817, 286.
Melinde, Portuguese factory at, 16.
Metcalfe, Sir C. T., afterwards Lord, on policy of non-intervention, 263; his embassy to Ranjit Singh, 1809, 270–1; makes treaties with Rajput states, 285; his minute on Bharatpur, 299; acting Governor-General, 1835–6, 307–9; later career of, 309; great services of, 289, 385.
Methwold signs convention with Portuguese, 1634, 30.
Mhow, Sir Hugh Rose's base of operations, 1858, 376.
Miani, battle of, 1843, 329.
Middleton, Resident at Lucknow, 185, 210.
Middleton, Sir Henry, commander of second voyage, 25; impeded by the Portuguese, 28.
Midnall, John, or Mildenhall, reaches India overland, 1599, 22.
Midnapur acquired by the British, 151.
Mill, Colonel, on Indian armies, 142.
Mill, James, quoted or referred to, 143, 171, 175, 177, 205.
Mill, John Stuart, his works used as text-books in Indian education, 304; draws up the Company's petition, 1858, 380.
Minchin, commander of Calcutta garrison, 1756, 133.
Minto, Lord, Governor-General, 1807–13, 266–75; formerly President of Board of Control, 266; former views, 267; divergences from policy of non-intervention, 268; checks Amir Khan, 268–9; sends embassies to Ranjit Singh, 270, to Persia, 273, to Kabul, 273; his expeditions to Mauritius and Java, 34, 274–5.
Miranpur Katra, battle of, 1774, 175.
Mirepoix, Duc de, French ambassador, 112.
Mir Jafar, Nawab of Bengal, British treaty with, 138; his doubtful conduct at Plassey, 139–40; enthroned at Murshidabad, 140; defended by Clive, 141; financial transactions of, with Clive and the Company's servants, 143–7; deposed in favour of Mir Kasim, 150–1; his restoration and death, 153; grants 'double batta' to the army, 158; his widow said by Nandkuma to have bribed Hastings, 186.
Mir Kasim, Nawab of Bengal, set up by the British, his concessions, 151; rebels against his bad treatment by the British, 152; is deposed, 153; flies to Oudh and is defeated at Baxar, 1764, 153; later references to, 155, 160.
Mirpur, Amir of, 325.
Mirza Muhammad, 130. *See* Siraj-ud-daula.
Moira, Earl of. *See* Hastings, Marquess of.
Mombassa, Portuguese factory at, 16.
Monson, member of Bengal Council, 1773–6, 182–4; dies, 1776, 184; referred to, 186, 188–9, 191.
Monson, Colonel, his disastrous retreat through Rajputana, 1804, 260.
Montagu, Chancellor of the Exchequer, 52.

Montgomery, Robert, a commissioner in the Punjab, 1851, 345.
Morellet, l'abbé, on French Company, 123–6.
Mornington, Earl of. *See* Wellesley, Lord.
Morse, Nicholas, Governor of Madras, surrenders Madras to the French, 1746, 100–1.
Mozaffar Jang, claimant to subadarship of the Deccan, supported by French troops defeats and kills An-waru-din, 1749, 107; taken prisoner by Nasir Jang, but installed as subadar, 108; his gifts to the French, 108; killed, 1751, 109.
Mudki, battle of, 1845, 336.
Muhammad Ali, son of An-waru-din, 107; supported by the British, 107–11; Nawab of Carnatic, 111, 112, 123; his relations with the government of Madras, 168, 194–5; his son, 248.
Muhammad of Ghor, his invasions of India, A. D. 1175–1206, 10.
Muhammad Raza Khan, deputy Nawab of Bengal, 153–4.
Mulraj, Sikh chieftain, rebellion of, 1848, 341–2, 344.
Multan, taken by Ranjit Singh, 1818, 310; besieged by Sikh rebels, 1848–9, 341–2, 344.
Munro, victor of Baxar, 1764, 153, 160; shameful retreat to Madras, 1780, 196.
Munro, Sir Thomas, on Maratha army, 258; opposed to abolition of the Company's monopoly, 277; suggests Company should become Peshwa, 287; his *ryotwari* settlement of Madras, 289; services of in the first Burmese war, 298; humanitarian administration of, 301, 385.
Munster, Treaty of, 1648, 65.
Murshidabad, Marathas plunder outskirts of, 74; Mir Jafar enthroned at, 140; treasury at, 145; treasury at, transferred to Calcutta, 171, 217; claimed by the Burmese, 295.
Murshid Kuli Khan, Nawab of Bengal, 1713–25, 70.
Muscovy, or Russia Company, the, 17.
Mutiny, the, Lord Dalhousie's responsibility for, 357; partly foreseen by Sir Charles Napier, 358; causes of, 360–7; outbreak of, 368; course of, 369–77; area affected by, 378; reasons for failure of, 378–81.
Mysore, first war with, 1780–4, 195–200; second war with, 1790–2, 234–5; third war with, 1799, 244–7; Raja of, set up by Lord Wellesley, 1799, 246, deposed by Bentinck, 1831, 305. *See also* Haidar Ali, and Tipu Sultan.

'Nabobs', the, name given to wealthy retired servants of the Company, 179–80.
Nadir Shah of Persia, his invasion of India, 1739, 269; Sind submits to, 325.
Nagpur, capital of the Bhonsla Raja of Berar, *q. v.*; passes to British by lapse, 1854, 352–3, 362.
Nana Farnavis, minister of the Peshwa, 239; relations with Sindhia, 240; with the Nizam, 241; dies, 1800, 254.
Nana Sahib, adopted son of Baji Rao II, 287; not allowed to draw his father's pension, 354, 362 3; his intrigues, 363; besieges British at Cawnpore, 369; massacres British women and children, 374; proclaimed Peshwa, his end, 377.
Nanak, Sikh prophet, 1469–1538, 269.
Nandkumar, charges of, against Hastings, 185–6; charged with forgery, 186; condemned and executed, 187; case of, considered, 187–90.
Napier, Sir Charles, his conduct

compared with that of Warren Hastings, 204; sent to Sind, his character and high-handed actions, 328; conquers Sind, 329; policy condemned, his cynicism, 329–30; sent to supersede Gough, 343; his controversy with Dalhousie, 358; diary of, quoted, 330, 362.
Napoleon Bonaparte, letter of, intercepted, 245; in Egypt, 251; his schemes of eastern conquest, 271–2, 273; his warning to Jansens, 274.
Narbada river, the, 2, 3.
Nasir Jang, claims subadarship of the Deccan, 107; defeats Mozaffar Jang, but is assassinated, 1750, 108.
Nasirabad, Mutiny at, 369.
Nawab, meaning of title, 11.
Nazim, meaning of title, 11.
Negapatam taken by the British, 1781, 198.
Neill, secures Allahabad in the Mutiny, 373; at Cawnpore, 374; killed at Lucknow, 374–5; his services to England, 379.
Nepal, description of, 279; war with, 1814–15, 280–81. *See also* Gurkhas.
Newbery travels overland to India, 1583, 21–2.
Newcastle, Duke of, 112.
Nicholson, Captain, sent to capture Chittagong, 1686, 44–5.
Nicholson, John, frontier officer, 339; his movable column in the Punjab, 369; efforts to send forces to Delhi, 370; at capture of Delhi, 372; on reprisals, 380; other references to, 374, 379.
Nilgiri Hills, the, 7.
Nimach, Mutiny at, 369.
Nizam, the, of Hyderabad, relations of, with British Marathas and Mysore, 168; makes Treaty of Masulipatam, 1768, with the British; forms confederacy against the British, 1780, 195; complications between British, Mysore, and, 232–3; part in second war with Mysore and share of conquests, 234–5; weakness of, 237; employs the Frenchman Raymond, 238, 251, 255; threatened by the Marathas, 238; appeals to Sir John Shore for support against Marathas, 1794, 240; defeated by Marathas at Kharda, 1795, 241, 244; first subsidiary alliance with, 1798, and disbandment of his French force, 245; gains from third Mysore war, 1799, 246; second subsidiary treaty with, 1780, 249, 254; receives districts from Raja of Berar, 1804, 259; reprimanded by Sir George Barlow, 266; protected from the Pindaris by Lord Minto, 269; plundered by the Pindaris, 1815–16, 283; loans to, 290; his capital during the Mutiny, 378, 379.
Nizam, Ali, Subadar of the Deccan, deposes and murders Salabat Jang, 123.
Nizamat, meaning of the term, 159.
Nizam-ul-Mulk, from 1723 becomes an independent ruler in the Deccan, 73; regains control of the Carnatic, 74; dies, 1748, 107.
Norris, Sir William, New Company's ambassador to the Mughal Emperor, 55; quoted, 55–6; his merits, gains audience with Aurangzeb, 56; failure of his mission, 57.
North, Lord, directors ask for loan from, 1772, 181; his coalition with Fox, 1783, 215.
North American States in revolt, 197, 214.
Northern Circars, the, ceded to the French, 1753, 111; partly occupied by the British, 113; definitely ceded to the Company, 1765, 123; Bussy in, 136; tribute paid to Nizam for, 168; Court of Directors on, 169; plundered by the Pindaris, 1815–16, 283.

Nott, General, Commander at Kandahar, 319; finds it impossible to march to Kabul, 1841, 320; ordered to abandon Kandahar, 322; destroys Ghazni and reaches Kabul, 323.
Nugent, Member of Parliament, 180.

Ochterlony, Sir David, defends Delhi from Holkar, 260; success in Gurkha war, 1814–15, 281; dies, 299.
Orme, quoted, on Surman's embassy, 62; on Dupleix, 115; on Ali Vardi Khan, 132; suggests Clive should be sent to Bengal, 1756, 134; Clive's letter to, 1757, 142.
Ormuz, Portuguese factory at, 16; captured by the British, 1622, 30.
Orry, French Minister of Finance, 98.
Ostend Company, 62–9; chartered, 1722, 63–5; opposition of England and Holland to, 64–5; suspended, 1727, suppressed, 1731, 66; later fate of, and settlements in India, 67, 68; Pitt on the abolition of, 69.
Oudh, Nawab Wazir of, 153; a 'buffer' state, 161; treaty of, with Rohillas, 1772, 174; succession question in, 1797, 241; territory of, ceded to Lord Wellesley, 249; Wellesley's high-handed treatment of, 248, 249–50; Nawab of, granted title of king, 1819, 354; annexation of, 1856, 354–6, 362. *See also* Shuja-ud-daula, Asaf-ud-daula, Begams of Oudh.
Outram, Sir James, quoted, 322; Resident at Hyderabad in Sind, 1842, 328; driven from Residency, his view of the Sind business, 329; on government of Oudh, 355–8; tries to make king of Oudh abdicate, 356; on origin of the Mutiny, 360; his work in Oudh, 363; with Havelock relieves Lucknow, 374; has himself to be relieved, 375; his services, 379.
Oxenden, Sir George, President of Surat and Governor of Bombay, 1662–9, 77.

Pagan, British defeat Burmese at, 1825, 297.
Palghat, 7; captured by Fullarton, 1783, 199.
Palmer, surrenders at Ghazni, 322.
Palmer & Co., transactions of, with Lord Hastings, 290.
Palpa, British repulsed at, 280.
Panchayats, committees of five in Sikh army, 333.
Paniar, battle of, 1843, 331.
Panipat, battles of, 1526, 10; 1761, 13.
Papillon, Thomas, opponent of Sir Josia Child, 49.
Paris, Peace of, 1763, 123.
Parmentier, Jean, 91.
Parmentier, Raoul, 91.
Paterson, William, one of founders of the Scottish Company, 51.
Patiala, Raja of, loyal in the Mutiny, 378.
Patna, English factory at, seized, 1686, 45; Mir Kasim enthroned at, 151.
Pearce, marches from Bengal to Madras, 1781, 197; effects junction with Coote, 198.
Pegu, conquered by the Burmese, 294; annexed by the British, 1852, 348–9.
Perkins, William, works of, sent to India, 85.
Permanent settlement of Bengal, the, 1793, 168, 172, 225, 227–31, 289.
Perron, French officer in Sindhia's service, 251, 257.
Persia, John Malcolm sent to, 1799, 252, 272, 273; attacks of, on Afghanistan, 311, 312; at war with Russia, 312; British pay indemnity to, 313; fruitlessly besiege Herat, 314–17;

British expedition against, 317; Sind submits to, 325; British war with, 1856, 359–60.
Peshawar, acquired by Ranjit Singh, 310, 312; Dost Muhammad eager that the British should help him to regain it, 313; an important post in the first Afghan war, 322; surrendered by the Sikhs to Dost Muhammad, 1848, 342.
Peshwa, Maratha dynasty of, at Poona, the rise of the Peshwas, 13, 70, 149; first British treaty with, 1739, 72, 74; English support candidate for the Peshwaship, 192–4; Macpherson's agreement with, 220, 232; Cornwallis's alliance with, 234; conduct of, in Cornwallis's war with Mysore, 235–6; territories of, 238; power of, in Maratha confederacy, 239, 240; change in succession to Peshwaship, 241; becomes dependent on British support, 244; conduct of, in Wellesley's war with Mysore, 245–6; Treaty of Bassein with, 1802, 254–6, 268; rebellion and defeat of, under Lord Hastings, 284–6; Peshwaship abolished, 288; attempt to establish office of, in the Mutiny, 361.
Peyton, fights drawn battle with La Bourdonnais, 1746, 100; in the Bay of Bengal, 104.
Phayre, Major Arthur, his administration of Burma, 349.
Philip II of Spain, 18, 21, 65.
Physiocrats, the, school of French economists, 123.
Pigot, Lord, Governor of Madras, deposed, and dies in prison, 195; cashiers Macpherson, 220.
Pindaris, the, invade Berar, 1809, 268; ravages of, 275, 283; origin and history of, 282; Lord Hastings's campaign against them, 1817, 285–6, 288.
Pitt, John, sent to Madras by the New Company, 55, 56.
Pitt, Thomas, interloper, 49; Governor of Madras, opposes John Pitt, 56.
Pitt, William, the elder, Earl of Chatham, on the Ostend Company, 69; his opinion of Clive, 165; Clive's letter to him, 179.
Pitt, William, the younger, his view of Nandkumar's case, 187; his India Act, 1784, 214–16, 232, 233, 267; votes against Hastings in Parliament, 216; his reasons for so doing, 217; friend of Cornwallis, 222; studies question of Permanent Settlement, 228; supports Wellesley, 243, 251; withdraws that support, 261–2.
Plantain the pirate, 71.
Plassey, battle of, 1757, 139-40; compared with Baxar, 153.
Plataea, Indian archers fight at, 479 B.C., 9.
Pocock, Admiral, his view of peace of 1754, 115; fights with D'Aché, 1759, 122.
Pollilore, battle of, 1781, 198.
Pollock, General, his services in the first Afghan war, 322–3.
Polo, Marco, travels of, in India, 1294–5, 14.
Pondicherry, founded, 1674, captured by the Dutch, 1693, its growth, &c., 92· compared with Madras, 95; development of, 96; threatened by Barnet, 100; besieged in vain by the English, 103; taken by the English, 1761, 122; restored, 123; recaptured, 197.
Poona, Holkar defeats Baji Rao II and Sindhia at, 254. *See also* Peshwas, the.
Popham takes Gwalior, 1780, 193–4.
Porter, Endymion, of Courten's Association, 39.
Porto Novo, battle of, 1781, 198.
Portugal annexed by Spain, 1580, 18.
Portuguese, the, discover sea route to India, 15; granted monopoly of eastern trade, 15; period of

their supremacy and decline, 16–17; attacked by the English and Dutch, 18; English attempt to break down monopoly, 21; arrest and imprison English travellers, 21; achievements of, 24; British naval victories over, 26, 30; British struggles with, 27; struggle between English, Portuguese, and Dutch, 28–30.
Pottinger, Eldred, his defence of Herat, 315; in the retreat from Kabul, 321.
Pragmatic Sanction, the, 66.
Prome occupied by the British, 1852, 348.
Promis, French pioneer in Madagascar, 91.
Public Works Department, 356.
Pulo Run, Courthope's defence of, 31; English expelled from, 1621–2, 33; restored to the English, 1654, 34; given back to the Dutch for New York, 1667, 42.
Punjab, settlement of, 339 40, 345–6; annexed by the British, 1849, 344.
Purandhar, Treaty of, 1776, 192, 194.
Purchas's *Pilgrims* sent to the East, 85.

Quiloa, Portuguese factory at, 16.

Raffles, Sir Stamford, his administration of Java, 275.
Raghunath Rao (Raghoba), pretender to the Peshwaship 1775, 192; pensioned off by the Peshwa, 194; English alliance with, 195, 197.
Rainier, Admiral, refuses to co-operate with Wellesley, 251.
Rait, R. S., quoted, 343.
Rajputana conquered by Akbar, 11.
Ramnagar, battle of, 1848, 342.
Rampur surrendered to Holkar, 266.
Ramu, Burmese defeat British at, 1824, 296.
Rangoon, Governor of, oppresses British merchants, 347; great pagoda at, stormed, 348.
Ranjit Singh, Holkar appeals to, 265, 270; early career of, 269–70; confined by Minto to the line west of the Sutlaj, 270; his treaty with the British, 1809, 271; character of, 271, 314; the Gurkhas appeal to, 282; gives asylum to Apa Sahib, 287; commercial treaty with, 306; extends his power and acquires Peshawar, 310–12; question of his restoring Peshawar, 313–14; Dost Muhammad appeals to British for aid against, 315; British treaty with, against Dost Muhammad, 1838, 316; dies, 1839, 318, 333; his proposals to the British to partition Sind, 325–6; later references to, 338, 378.
Ratgarh captured by Sir Hugh Rose, 1858, 376.
Raworth, Robert, rebels against Governor of Madras, 1713, 90.
Raymond, French officer in service of the Nizam, 238.
Raymond, George, lost on voyage to the East, 1591, 22.
Reed, General, British commander in the Mutiny, 372.
Regulating Act, the, 1773, 170, 179, 182; defects of, 182–3; as affecting relations of Bombay and Madras to Calcutta, 191–2; as affecting relations of Council to Supreme Court, 213; referred to, 214.
Richelieu founds Société de l'Orient, 1642, 91.
Ripon, Marquess of, compared with Lord William Bentinck, 301.
Rockingham's ministry, fall of, saves Hastings, 215.
Roe, Sir Thomas, ambassador to Jahangir, 1615–19, 12, 36, 37; his views on Portuguese and Dutch policy, 36–7; leaves India, 37; his advice departed from, 43.
Rohilkhand, description of, 174; ceded to the British, 1801, 249. *See also* Rohillas.
Rohillas, war with, 174–8, 185;

treaty of, with Oudh, 174; conquered by Oudh helped by the British, 175; controversy as to Rohilla war, 175–7; responsibility of Hastings considered, 177–8; attitude of the Bengal Council to, 185; Parliament acquits Hastings on charge concerning Rohilla war, 216.
Rose, Sir Hugh, afterwards Lord Strathnairn, his campaign in central India, 1858, 375–7, 379, 380.
Rous, Director, partisan of Clive, 155.
Russia, relations of, with France, Great Britain, and Persia, 272, 273; advance of, to Indian frontier, 306, 313; Russian officers at Herat, 312, 314, 315; Russian embassy at Kabul, 315, 316, recalled, 317; Russian expedition to Khiva fails, 318.
Russia, or Muscovy Company, 17.
Ryotwari settlement of Madras, 289.
Ryswick, Peace of, 1697, restores Pondicherry to the French, 92.

Sadr Diwani Adalat, Civil, Court of Appeal, established by Warren Hastings, 172; Presidency of, given to Impey, 213; reorganized by Cornwallis, 231.
Sadr Nizamat Adalat, Criminal Court of Appeal, established by Warren Hastings, 172; reorganized by Cornwallis, 231.
Sadras, conference at, 1753, 111.
Sagauli, Treaty of, 1816, 281.
St. Helena, when acquired, rising in, 43.
St. Malo, merchants of, 94.
St. Thomé captured by the Dutch, 1674, 92.
Sakas, early invaders of India, 9.
Salabat Jang, Subadar of the Deccan, enthroned by Bussy, 109; cedes Northern Circars to the French, 111; cedes Masulipatam to the British, 1758, 121; murdered, 123.
Salar Jang, Sir, of Hyderabad, keeps Hyderabad loyal in the Mutiny, 378–9.
Salbai, Treaty of, 1782, 194, 198.
Sale, Sir Robert, withdraws from Gandamak to Jalalabad, 320; his defence of Jalalabad, 321–3; killed at Mudki, 1845, 336.
Salsette, Nicholson ordered to capture, 1686, 45; surrendered to the British, 1775, 192; retained by Treaty of Purandhar, 1776, 192, and Treaty of Salbai, 1782, 194.
Sambalpur passes to the British by lapse, 1849, 352.
Sambhaji, the Maratha, his war with Aurangzeb, 72.
Samudragupta, A.D. 400, his empire, 9.
Sandys, Thomas, trial of, 1683, 49.
Sarguja, Raja of, 353.
Satara passes to the British by lapse, 1848, 352, 362.
Satara, Raja of, a descendant of Siraji, and *roi fainéant*, 70, 149, 239; seized by Baji Rao II, 1817, 285; re-established in power by the British, 1818, 287–8, 352.
Sati, or suttee, abolished in Bengal, 303, 364, in the Punjab, 340.
Satpura mountains, the, 2.
Saugor relieved, 1858, 376.
Saunders, President of Madras, 112.
Scotland, Company of, 1695, 51.
Scrafton appointed supervisor, but lost at sea, 1769, 181.
Secretary of State for India established, 383.
Seignelay, official of French Company, 1684, 96.
Seleucus Nikator, his invasion of India, 14.
Sepoy army, condition of, in 1857, 365–6.
Serampore, missionaries of, 290.
Seringapatam, spoils of, offered to Lord Wellesley, 148; threatened by Fullarton, 1783, 199; outworks of captured, 1792, 234;

there, 1608, 25; English granted permission to settle there, 26, 35; chief English settlement till 1687, 37; French factory at, 1668, 92; Treaty of, 1775, 192; native government of, taken over by Wellesley, 244, 247, 249.
Surji-arjangaon, Treaty of, 1803, 258; modified in 1805, 265, and in 1817, 285.
Surman, John, his embassy to Delhi, 1715, 61–2, 72, 74.
Sutanati, site of Calcutta, 45.
Swedish East India Company, 1731, 67.
Sykes, member of Clive's Select Committee, 155.

Talpura tribe, the, 325.
Talukdars, the, or landowners of Oudh, oppress the peasantry, 355; their attitude in the Mutiny, 364; Canning's proclamation as to, 376.
Tamil, a language of southern India, 9.
Tanjore, English support claimant to throne of, 106; attacked by Chanda Sahib, 107; Raja of, takes part in Carnatic war, 110; failure of Lally's attack on, 120–1; Raja of, deposed by Madras Government, 1773, 194; restored, 195; administration of, taken over by Wellesley, 1799, 244, 247; regal title of Raja of, abolished, 1855, 354.
Tantia Topi, repulses Windham, 376; defeated at Betwa, 376; defeated, captured, and hanged, 1859, 377.
Tapti, river, the, 6.
Tarai, or Duars, 2.
Tata, factory at, abandoned, 325.
Taylor, the pirate, 71.
Teheran, Treaty of, 1809, 273, 312; British minister at, driven away, 359–60.
Tej Singh, Sikh general, at Ferozeshah, 1845, 337.
Telugu, language of southern India, 9.
Temple, Sir Richard, quoted, 357.
Tenasserim, conquered by the Burmese from Siam, 1766, 294; subdued by the British, 1824, 297; ceded to the British, 1826, 297–8.
Ternate, chief of, makes a treaty with Drake, 1579, 18.
Tezin, Pollock defeats Afghans at, 1842, 323.
Thar, the Indian desert, 6.
Thomason, Indian administrator, 385.
Thornton, E., quoted, 148, 171, 195.
Thugs, the, suppressed, 1830, 303, 345.
Tilsit, Treaty of, 1807, 272.
Tipu Sultan, of Mysore, defeats Braithwaite, 198; on Malabar coast, 199; concludes Treaty of Mangalore, 1784, 200; Cornwallis's war with, 1790–2, 225, 233–5; attacks Travancore, 1789, 234; forced to cede half his dominions to the British, 1792, 235; referred to, 238; his alliance with the French Republic, 244; Lord Wellesley's war with, 1799, 245–7; death of, 246; character of, 247.
Todar Mall, Akbar's finance minister, 11.
Tonk surrendered to Holkar, 266.
Tordesillas, Treaty of, 1494, 15.
Towerson, English agent at Amboyna, 33.
Travancore attacked by Tipu Sultan, 234, 241.
Trichinopoly, besieged by the Marathas, 1741, 74; Dupleix wishes to attack, 107; English reinforcements at, 108, 109; relieved by Lawrence and Clive, 110; Law surrenders at, 110, 118.
Trieste, 63, 67.
Trimbakji, minister of the Peshwa, murders minister of the Gaikwar, 284; imprisoned at Chunar, 287.

Trincomali, taken by the English, 1782, 198; recaptured by the French, 1782, 199.
Trinomali, battle of, 1767, 169.
Tripartite, Treaty, the, of 1790, with the Peshwa and Nizam, 1790, 234, 245; of 1838, with the Sikhs and Shah Shuja, 316, 322.
Trivadi captured by the French, 108.
Tsanpo, Tibetan name for the Brahmaputra, 3.
Tulu, ancient language of southern India, 9.
Tungabhadra river, the, 6.
Turkey Company, the, renamed Levant Company, 22.
Tyre an emporium of eastern trade, 14.

Udaipur, treaty concluded with, 1817, 285; passes to the British by lapse, 1852, 352, 353.
United Dutch Company founded, 1602, 24, 25.
Utrecht, Peace of, 1713, 63.

Valdavur assigned to Dupleix, 108, 117.
Vansittart, Governor of Bengal, 150; deposes Mir Jafar, 151; resists unjust policy of his Council, 152; perishes at sea, 181.
Van Speult, Dutch Governor of Amboyna, 33, 34.
Vedic literature, 8.
Vellore, mutiny of sepoys at, 1807, 266, 300.
Venice an emporium of eastern trade, 14.
Ventura, French officer in service of Ranjit Singh, 310.
Verelst, quoted, 152, 154, 160; Governor of Bengal, 1767–9, 167; one of Clive's Select Committee, 155; his emoluments, 156 *note*.
Victoria, Queen, proclamation of, 1858, 383–4; referred to, 386.
Vienna, Treaty of, 1725, 66.
Vijayanagar, Hindu State of, 10.
Vindhya range, the, 2.
Vizagapatam, English factory at, seized, 1686, 45.
Voltaire quoted, 91, 105, 118.

Waite, Sir Nicholas, sent to Bombay as representative of the New Company, 55.
Walpole, Horace, quoted, 139, 166.
Wandiwash, battle of, 1760, 122.
Wargaon, Convention of, 1779, 193.
Watson, Admiral, 114, arrives in India, 115; commands fleet in Bengal, 1756–7, 135; his relations with Clive, 136, 137; Clive counterfeits his signature, 138.
Weber, Henry, quoted, 116, 123.
Wellesley, Sir Arthur, afterwards Duke of Wellington, commands Nizam's contingent, 1799, 245; quoted, 246, 256; victor of Assaye, and Argaon, 1803, 257; his treaties, 258; his view on Lord William Bentinck, 300; his opinion on first Afghan war, 317; warns Lord Ellenborough, 322; advises appointment of Hardinge, 333.
Wellesley, Henry, appointed commissioner to settle the Oudh ceded districts, 249; criticism on his appointment, 252.
Wellesley, Marquess of, and Earl of Mornington, Governor-General 1798–1805, refuses share of the spoils of Seringapatam, 148; compared with Warren Hastings, 204; completes work of Cornwallis, 234; his wars and annexations, 237; appointed governor-general, 242; his period of office, 243–62; his character, 243–4; war with Mysore, 1799, 244–7; given a marquisate, 246; his acquisitions of territory and subsidiary treaties with Tanjore, Hyderabad, and Oudh, 247–9; his policy to native States considered, 249–

50; his policy against the French, 250–1; his activities alienate the Directors, 252; establishes college of Fort William, 252; his Maratha war, 252–62; makes Treaty of Bassein, 1802, 255; his view of Peace of 1804 proves false, 259–60; his attitude to the Directors, 261; treatment of, compared with that of Warren Hastings, 262; general policy of, 263–4, 268; opposes abolition of the Company's monopoly, 277; his work completed by Lord Hastings, 279; comparison of, with Lord Hastings, 288, 290–1; Press regulations of, 308; later references to, 340, 354, 385, 386.
Westminster, Treaty of, 1386, 18.
Westminster, Treaty of, 1654, 34.
Whish, General, besieges Multan, 342.
White Huns, the, early invaders of India, 9.
Whiteway, R. S., quoted, 16.
William III and the Scottish Company, 51–2.
Willoughby, Sir Hugh, discovers Nova Zembla, 17.
Wilson, Sir Archdale, Commander-in-Chief at siege of Delhi, 370, 372.
Wilson, Sir Charles, quoted, 165.
Wilson, H. H., on Chait Singh, 205; opponent of Macaulay, 304; quoted, 305.
Windham, General, defeated at Cawnpore, 332, 376.
Winter, Sir Edward, Governor of Fort St. George, rebels against the Company, 76, 77, 90.
Wood, Benjamin, lost at sea, 1596, 22.
Wyld commands relief force in Afghan war, 322.

Yale, Elihu, President of Madras, 1687–92, 77.
Yandaboo, Peace of, 1826, 297, 305.
Yorktown, Cornwallis's surrender to Washington at, 222.
Yule, Colonel, his *Diary of William Hedges* referred to, 43, 78.

Zamindars, position of, in Bengal, 227–31.
Zeman Shah, of Kabul, his invasion of India, 1796, 241.

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